
Understanding...

Managing business growth

A guide to business growth
with IT and communications



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Welcome to 'Understanding... Managing Business Growth', one in our series of guides designed to help smaller businesses get more from their IT and communications systems.

We aim to demystify key topics by:

- Explaining the basics of concepts so you can see how they apply to your business
- Outlining key opportunities and benefits so you can see what is possible
- Advising on the best approach to move forward, helping you to make the right decisions for your business and avoid common pitfalls
- Helping you to save time and money, simplifying the way you approach communications

For further advice about technology and what it can do for your business, access case studies and articles or to download copies of the other 'Understanding...' guides, go to BT Business Insight, a unique online resource for small businesses, at www.bt.com/insight

To find out more about how BT can help your company, visit our website at www.bt.com/business

Ensuring your IT and communications grow with you

- ▶ IT and communications technologies now sit at the heart of every business, no matter what size your company is, where you are based, or which sector you operate in. As a result, getting it right, not just as you start up the company but also as you grow, is essential in helping you improve efficiency, get a better return on your investments and compete effectively.



A network for now and the future

- Networks come in all shapes and sizes, but with careful planning you can create the foundation for future growth.
- In its simplest form a network could be a phone and broadband connection linked to a fax machine and a printer. A network can also be a system that links your phones, computers and other devices with each other and with other offices, companies and customers and information sources.
- Local Area Networks (LANs) cover an entire site or office and may be connected to wide area networks (WANs) to link up with other sites and offices and to external networks – including the internet.
- Companies often find that over time they end up running a series of separate networks where each needs its own specialist support, such as one for voice traffic and another for data. However, all the connections and communications for voice and data can be brought together – or ‘converged’ – onto one integrated network, based on Internet Protocol (IP).
- Having a single network not only means that it can grow with your business. It also means systems and applications can be designed and configured to interact in new ways to provide new services, new combinations of services, and new ways of working.



Protecting your business

Having a single network makes IT and communications a lot simpler, and enables a business to concentrate its focus on maintaining high awareness of external threats to its network and systems, and to counter those threats. You also need to consider how you protect business and customer data in order to prevent damage to revenues and reputation that could take years to repair. Some areas to consider are:

- **Data protection**
Automatic data backups and offsite storage can help keep your information secure and accessible, helping you meet obligations to protect customer and business data
- **Business continuity**
Routine servicing can help minimise equipment failures and a formal service agreement can guarantee a rapid response to emergencies. Disasters can happen and you need to plan for continuity and recovery
- **Hacking and malicious damage**
Built-in firewalls help you to thwart illicit entry at your network perimeter and control access to information and services
- **Fraud and abuse**
Online monitoring of network, service and line usage helps you to identify and investigate unusual traffic or activity that may represent abuse of your systems



Flexible working for all

In today's broadband and mobile world, remote workers and home workers can be in the office virtually, accessing the same systems and documents as they could from their desks. It is now often as simple as having a broadband connection to securely access email or the company's network. It also provides the opportunity to use services such as Voice over IP telephony and remote data backup services.

Services, such as BT Business Email, offer even the smallest company a choice of options, ranging from basic email access to tools that offer the ability to share information and services, such as company-wide calendars, address books and folders.

Broadband also opens up a world of collaborative tools that offer the potential to save time and money by sharing information and services across the company. Users can access these services wherever they are, via their desktop, a remote web browser or a mobile device, ensuring that your employees can continue to work effectively wherever they need to be.

As well as removing the upfront costs associated with large-scale collaboration tools, the latest hosted services allow smaller businesses to:

- **Share files and folders**
Important files, such as spreadsheets, reports and sales presentations can be stored in public folders and accessed over the internet. As a result, team members can access files no matter where they are
- **Work as a team remotely**
No matter where you or your team is, you can readily access each other's calendars to schedule meetings and delegate or plan tasks. You can also collaborate on documents and be sure you are always looking at the most current version
- **Create a virtual workplace**
You can set up a workplace for everyone in your company or for a selected group of team members, in order to manage a project or share project-related messages, files, schedules, tasks and applications

Case study: BT helps Invocom become always on

Running a team of consultants and contractors always has its challenges from a communications point of view. However, these challenges have become even greater over the last few years, with teams needing to collaborate, as well as accessing mails in the office, at home, on a client site and being available on the phone. Teams often have to work together on documents, as well as access emails in the office, at home and on a client site.

This is the situation that faced telecoms consultancy Invocom, a professional services company. After experiencing problems with its existing supplier, the company turned to BT to provide secure remote email access and collaboration tools with Business Email Plus Organise and Share.

Invocom supports telecommunications companies by designing new networks and helping to manage those that are already in place. Based in Reading, the company has a team of more than 30 people working with customers across Europe.

“Our employees often use email as their primary means of communication with customers and colleagues, so it's essential they can access their accounts securely from wherever they are – whether that be a client site, hotel room or home office,” explains Nick Robbins-Cherry, Finance Manager at Invocom. **“We were using a hosted solution, but often had difficulty getting to email – that was unacceptable, so we chose to move over to BT.”**

Business Email Plus Organise and Share uses the latest Microsoft Exchange technology to allow users to share information, including mailboxes, calendar, task lists and specified documents, across an organisation. It also offers a company-wide global address book and secure access to email via Outlook Web Access (OWA).

Invocom's consultants spend around 90 per cent of their time on site with clients, so often have to access email from outside the Invocom network. These networks are generally configured in such a way that it is difficult to access mail servers through the firewall, so consultants have traditionally used dial-up access. With BT Business Email, the team can access their email via Outlook Web Access in a web browser, making the task much simpler.

As well as reliable and easy email access via a web browser, the ability to use all the advanced features included in Microsoft Outlook, such as shared calendar, was also crucial, as was spam filtering.

“For a team that is working in multiple locations, it's essential to know what their schedules look like,” says Nick Robbins-Cherry. **“The shared calendar allows us to schedule meetings and calls without having to second guess people's availability.”**

As a result, Invocom employees can always get hold of each other, ensuring a closer working relationship and more time to focus on clients.

Keeping the team mobile

New ways of working are making us more mobile, and hence more productive. However, mobile technology isn't just for 'road warriors', and isn't just limited to the mobile phone. Most of us go out of the office for meetings and presentations, or would benefit from working from home on occasions. Some of us even spend a large proportion of our time at clients' sites.

As a result, no matter what size your company is or which sector you work in, mobile broadband and services can benefit your business.

Mobile email

Email is an integral part of business communications for every company. The latest email tools provide a great starting point for companies looking to allow staff to work when they are not in the office. This can be something as simple as working from home or a hotel room, to receiving an updated presentation as you go into an important meeting.

Making calls on the move

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services also add to a company's mobility, as they allow you to use the same number, no matter where you are. All you have to do is ensure you have access to an internet connection and then you can make and receive calls from your computer as though you were in the office.

Equally, you could use a single phone to switch from mobile rates to fixed-line call rates once you enter the building. This ensures consistency of communications on a single number, but has the benefit of lower overall cost than a 'dual phone' approach.

Bringing mobile and broadband together

With the challenge of getting a small business off the ground and building on its success, communication tools such as the mobile phone are essential. However, it can become a cause of worry when it comes to keeping costs under control – particularly now that we like to use them in the office rather than reaching for the landline.

New converged fixed and mobile services, like BT Business Fusion, offer a host of new benefits to increase productivity and performance and allow you to get even more value out of your broadband connection. Out and about, BT Fusion works like a normal mobile, but in the office or in one of 2,000 BT Openzone hotspots in the UK and Ireland the handset recognises where you are and automatically sends calls over broadband, rather than the mobile network.

Case study: ESFAC Office facilities, even when you can't get to the office

ESFAC is a private company providing medical training services and emergency medical cover, particularly for corporate and public events. Company co-founder and Managing Director, Kim Coe, says: **“Working for a small company my co-director and I are both heavily involved in service delivery, yet we also need to run the company. With an ever greater reliance on email communication, staying on top of things when we are away from base was becoming more and more of a challenge.”**

ESFAC is a seven-days-a-week business. As well as needing email and internet facilities when on the move, its two directors also wanted to have remote access to the Microsoft Outlook application that stores events calendar and business commitments. ESFAC had experimented with using a laptop with a data card and also with a PDA device, but had found both to be a compromise and somewhat cumbersome given the nature of its activities. As a long-term BT customer for fixed line and broadband services, ESFAC approached BT to see if there was a more elegant solution.

BT Office Anywhere was a perfect fit and ESFAC contracted for two devices. With BT Office Anywhere users have real-time access to email, calendar, contacts, and documents, as well as being able to make and receive voice calls through a Microsoft® Windows Mobile® 5 Smartphone handset. A cost-effective subscription provides inclusive, any network minutes, and a data allowance for email. It also enables unlimited, hour-long, Voice over IP (VoIP) calls to UK landlines from office, private, or public Wi-Fi hotspots at no extra cost.

Kim Coe comments: **“I am no IT expert but I have found BT Office Anywhere quite intuitive and easy to use. The handheld device has a good-sized colour screen, yet it is still compact and lightweight.”** BT Office Anywhere made an immediate impact in boosting the personal productivity and efficiency of ESFAC's directors. Kim Coe continues: **“When we are providing emergency medical cover at events a lot of the time we are just sitting around waiting for a patient. Now with BT Office Anywhere we can use this time to good effect, checking or sending emails, scheduling our staff, or even conducting internet banking transactions.”**

The VoIP functionality of the BT Office Anywhere solution is also helping ESFAC reduce its voice communications costs. This feature is particularly relevant for ESFAC because much of the time the company directors are either at stadiums and arenas that have Wi-Fi access, or in the office, which is equipped with a BT Business wireless hub (ESFAC also have two BT Fusion Wi-Fi handsets for staff). In either case, with BT Office Anywhere voice calls can be made over the internet through a Wi-Fi connection at much lower cost than conventional telephony services.

Kim Coe sums up: **“BT Office Anywhere is an absolute marvel. It really does enable us to have the facilities of our office wherever we are.”**

Controlling costs as you grow

As you grow, your underlying business costs tend to increase too, so controlling costs is one of the simplest ways to improve your company's bottom line. Where IT and communications costs are concerned, for example, in order to control costs effectively it is essential to look at your business' systems and requirements as a whole. This will enable you to clearly see just where savings can be made and ensure that you are still planning for the future and remain competitive in the longer term.

Consolidate your suppliers

Large corporate organisations already benefit hugely from consolidated IT and communications services, which allow them to simplify their systems while controlling and reducing costs. For smaller businesses too, bringing together IT and communications services like broadband, fixed-line telephone and mobile, simplifies things by reducing the number of suppliers that have to be managed and ultimately helping to control costs.

Consolidated IT and communications services such as BT Business One Plan offer a selection of benefits, including capped calling rates to and from mobiles. With a third of the UK's small businesses choosing to use their mobiles in preference to their landlines, equating to 70 per cent of the average business call bill, this is an area where real savings can be made. There are also discounts of up to 5 per cent available on total annual spend.

Another benefit of consolidated services is the ability to look at IT and communications spend as a whole. This allows you to use analytical software to see how the majority of calls are made and the most popular destinations, in order to choose the best option to suite your requirements.

Try a different type of software

As you grow, the type of software you need and use changes. Traditionally, you had to pay up front for the software licence fee and then ongoing maintenance or upgrade charges. This often involved a large initial capital expenditure – both in terms of the software itself and the hardware to run it on. Also, because software has become more complex, it requires specialists in particular applications to configure and manage systems.

Times have changed and 'Software as a Service' (SaaS) applications now allow you to use the latest business-grade software developed specifically to meet your needs on a subscription basis. This removes the need for upfront capital investment in hardware and software, as well as upgrade costs. It also means that you no longer need to manage and support critical business applications in-house, as that is taken care of by the company supplying the service.

Business-grade support when you need it

As a business grows, your reliance on IT and communications systems tends to increase. For a fixed monthly fee of as little as £10 per computer per month, on-demand support allows specialist IT consultants to access and repair your computer over a broadband connection.

If your business has more demanding support requirements, there are also tailored solutions, such as BT IT Manager, that allow you to pick the support plans that best suit your specific requirements. These range from advice over-the-phone, through proactive management (including remote running of software applications and updates to installing PCs or networks), to providing a more complex long-term solution. You can even choose finance options, to reduce up-front expenditure on IT.

Controlling costs as you grow (continued)

Case study: Communications costs halved with fixed-mobile integration

The nature of WasteCare's business – the collection and disposal of chemicals and other waste products – means that the vast majority of its workforce is mobile. The company has more than 90 vehicles and each driver has a mobile phone so that he or she can stay in touch, be informed of any schedule changes and advise customers of their expected time of arrival. Graham Whittaker, IT Director at WasteCare, comments: **“The logistics of managing our mobile communications account had become complex and our costs appeared high. We decided to seek a new contract that would simplify our billing and administration as well as significantly reduce costs.”**

WasteCare – a division of Silver Lining Industries Limited – offers waste management, disposal, recycling, and recovery services and is the UK's leading online total waste management solution provider. The company is licensed to handle a wide range of hazardous and non-hazardous waste – such as chemicals, electrical products, and oils – for collection, treatment, recovery, and recycling. WasteCare operates from 11 regional depots utilising a dedicated fleet of owned vehicles throughout Great Britain and Ireland.

WasteCare is a long-term customer of BT for fixed line services. Its headquarters in Leeds is served by BT ISDN digital lines and its depots, as well as home workers, are equipped with standard BT telephone lines with BT Business Total Broadband services. This enables access over the internet to WasteCare's centrally hosted, bespoke waste management application – the nerve centre of its entire business operation.

Consolidating fixed and mobile services Graham Whittaker continues: **“I consider BT's service to be far superior to many others and so I approached them to see about consolidating our fixed, broadband, and mobile communications.”**

WasteCare started by porting around 75 mobiles to BT from an alternative provider – a process that went without a hitch.

Subsequently, WasteCare increased its contracts to a total of around 100 mobiles and signed up for a BT Business One Plan communications package. This unifies all of WasteCare's communications expenditure into a single plan, from a single supplier and with one bill, and allows the company to benefit from reduced BT prices as well as capped call rates. Spending patterns can be easily reviewed and analysed on a PC using the BT Billing Analyst application that is provided at no extra cost with the BT OneBill service.

Rather than supplying new mobile handsets, BT set up a hardware fund for WasteCare to access as needed throughout the two-year contract period. Graham Whittaker remarks: **“This allows us to replace damaged mobiles – an inevitability in our line of work – and buy accessories such as Bluetooth headsets, without additional charge. This is a great benefit to us and it makes our expenditure that much more predictable.”**

The consolidation of fixed and mobile services with BT has enabled WasteCare to exceed its business objective – its total communications expenditure has almost halved. Graham Whittaker sums up: **“With our previous service provider we were spending more each month on mobiles alone than we spend in total now. By pulling all of our fixed, mobile, and broadband services together with BT we will save in the region of £50,000 in the first year alone.”**

Moving into new markets

- Every business now needs to have a web presence, no matter how big they are or what line of business they are in, but cost, complexity and the rapidly evolving nature of the internet have been barriers to some companies getting online. At the same time, your web presence has to reflect your company in the offline world.
- The trouble is, growing companies often don't have the time, internal skills or money to develop and market an effective online presence. However, there are a range of cost-effective options available to help businesses at every stage of their online journey.
- At the most basic level is free web space that is included in certain business broadband packages and networking sites, like BT Tradespace, that allows any business to easily build an online presence in minutes. This provides you with the opportunity to use the latest social networking tools, such as blogs and podcasts, to showcase products and services, whether you have a website or not.
- For those with more advanced requirements, advanced web hosting services include domain names, additional web space and advanced website management features, along with tools to market and promote your site through the leading search engines. There are also options that allow you to sell directly through your site.
- As you grow, the traffic to your site will also grow, so you will require higher bandwidth in order to maintain access to your site. As a result, you will need to consider a solution that has the power and flexibility of a corporate data centre. The trouble is that this can be costly, but there are a range of hosted dedicated server options available.

Case study: Business blooms online with BT Tradespace

ArenaFlowers.com was launched in September 2006 to provide a more ethical way of buying cut flowers and plants. It also buys its stock directly from auctions in Holland, cutting out the middleman to ensure flowers are not only incredibly fresh but great value.

Will Wynne, Managing Director of ArenaFlowers.com, is no stranger to e-commerce, having worked at eBay prior to joining the company. As a result, the company communicates with its customers and partners primarily online.

In order to extend its reach, it signed up to BT Tradespace – the online trade community specifically designed for small businesses – as soon as it was launched.

BT Tradespace Basic is a simple-to-use, free service that offers members unlimited blogging, contact details, two podcasts, five photos, two videos and membership to one community.

For those with more demanding requirements, **BT Tradespace Contact** is an enhanced service where businesses can upload unlimited content and use advanced features, such as Click to Call, as well as join unlimited communities.

Tradespace provides ArenaFlowers.com with another opportunity to attract potential customers and partners to its site.

“Tradespace is our first attempt at business social networking,” Will Wynne says. **“But already it has proved an invaluable tool. We had done a lot with search engine optimisation but we were concerned about our reliance on third party search engines.”**

“Online shopping experiences can become impersonal all too easily,” Will Wynne explains. **“Being part of the BT Tradespace community really does allow us to add that personal touch, particularly with the blogs and podcasts options. We’ve recently had an interview with BBC London and made a recruitment video to post to YouTube. Both of these have been added to our Tradespace portal and proved really popular.”**

ArenaFlowers.com wants to provide far more than an offline experience online and the competition amongst internet florists is high. It is important for the company to keep customers updated, particularly about new products. Blogging through BT Tradespace has allowed the company to do this, as well as establish itself as a trusted brand.

Will Wynne concludes: **“Much like eBay allows consumers to get into e-commerce very quickly, Tradespace helps businesses involve themselves in social networking right away. As the Tradespace offering grows with new features and functionality, businesses can grow with it too.”**

“Tradespace also helps us to improve our business model, given the level of interaction that the portal encourages. Customers, partners and prospects can rate, refer and compare us to other businesses, which gives us further insight into what our customers and partners really want.”

As Tradespace grows, BT will create Community Channels linking buyers and sellers through communities of interest and display the most popular content from all of the member Tradespaces in that community, show top rated sellers, and provide a space for buyers and sellers to converse.

<http://arenaflores.bttradespace.com/>

Offices worldwide

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