

Always-On Communication Services Essential “Basic Need” for Business

More than 70 years ago, psychologist Abraham Maslow theorized that human behavior is guided by a hierarchal set of needs for air, food, shelter, sexual intimacy, safety and security, friendship, and achievement – among others.

In the digital age, perhaps only one of Maslow’s needs (and you can probably guess which one) is viewed as more vital than reliable, secure, and ubiquitous access to broadband Internet service.

All kidding aside, [half a dozen nations](#) have enacted laws in recent years to protect and expand broad Internet availability for their citizens.

Even the United Nations declared in 2011 that Internet access is a basic human right. The U.N. report noted that “...the Internet is one of the most powerful instruments of the 21st century for increasing transparency in the conduct of the powerful, access to information, and for facilitating active citizen participation in building democratic societies.”

Critical Business Need

While humans need food, shelter, safety, and interaction with others in order to thrive, businesses, too, have similar hierarchical needs that must be fulfilled. The parallels are both direct and indirect. To function optimally, companies require a location from which to operate; safety, security, and stability; and the collaboration of employees to achieve for the good of the enterprise. As was noted, Internet connectivity, available anywhere, and at high speed is now widely recognized as a fundamental individual right. Given that success in commercial endeavors is a human-reliant proposition, it’s clear that the need for Internet connectivity is just as indispensable for business. In fact, it could be argued that it’s a basic requirement that underpins successful global commerce and economic progress.

Furthermore, businesses now recognize that a cloud-based IT infrastructure is essential. Most have now include everything from affordable, high-speed, and redundant Internet, to private wireless access for employees and a public WiFi network for customers.

All of these technologies make it obvious that times have certainly changed. Dedicated office spaces, desk phones, and land lines can seem like quaint antiquities, especially to millennial employees, now the second largest generation in America. For these workers, digital communication and mobility is second nature. They grew up using laptops, tablets, and smartphones, and interacting via text, Snapchat, and Skype, so they expect instantaneous communication and immediate response.

A [2016 Digital Workplace Communications Survey](#) found that millennials are entering the workforce “armed with an arsenal of mobile communication tools and expecting the same from their employers.”

To keep pace, businesses large and small are adopting technologies to help workers who use a multitude of devices to connect and collaborate via audio, video, chat, instant messaging, and email. With the emerging trends of mobility and 24/7 connectivity, and the prevalence of bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policies, employees today are on the move, escaping the confines of cubicles, and accessing powerful smartphone apps and cloud-based phone systems. In this scenario, everyone wins: customers can receive 24-7-365 support and employees can serve them more rapidly and productively no matter where they work.

And as the world becomes ever-more mobile, no one can forget the importance of WiFi connectivity. The ubiquity of both handheld devices and WiFi present unprecedented opportunities to get more done and to connect, learn, and simplify business. For stores, clinics, restaurants, hotels, and other firms, WiFi enables business to engage with customers, guests, and patients. Reliable Internet connectivity is essential for success as employees move between offices, stores, cubicles, and conference rooms to meet their clients, patients, and colleagues.

Individuals can live with the inconvenience of a brief cable TV outage. For a business, however, slow or intermittent Internet service or a complete outage has potentially significant and negative ramifications.

The cost of downtime has grown exponentially, so the need for always-on, reliable connectivity has become a business imperative.

Reliance on cloud services

In today's fast-paced business environment, a cloud-based IT infrastructure is essential.

Fortunately, blazing fast, reliable, business-class Internet services are now more readily available and more affordable than ever. Businesses now have access to symmetric upload and download speeds, dedicated versus shared services, along with guaranteed performance backed by business-class SLAs.

With the cloud as the network, companies can take advantage of on an almost never-ending range of cloud-powered solutions including voice over IP, Unified Communications, email, CRMs, ERPs, file sharing, data backup, and server virtualization. Newer technologies (like SD-WAN) are also making it easier and more cost-effective for businesses to rollout and fully leverage these cloud-delivered network solutions. This can now be accomplished using cheaper broadband links than previously-supported technologies, and without sacrificing real-time application performance, like voice and video.

Maslow, through his hierarchy, suggested that people ultimately strive toward self-actualization – the motivation to reach their full potential. In commerce the goal is certainly the same: network-enabled Internet technology can help businesses reach *their* full potential to streamline operations and to serve their customers faster and more efficiently.