ILL: The Concept and Significance of SLAs

While taking an Internet Leased Line connection that promises specific bandwidth, upload-download speeds and other features for a seamless network, it is essential to get all of them documented in a formal Service Level Agreement draft. An SLA describes all the rights and obligations of the parties involved in a transaction, and it protects the interest of the business paying for a service.

As a private Internet connectivity medium, an Internet Leased Line (ILL) is preferred by businesses that need dedicated connections with symmetric bandwidths. Unlike a broadband connection, ILL is not shared with other users in the vicinity, and the paying subscriber is always assured high upload-download speeds.

Although most of the wired and wireless Internet connections provided today are marketed with the promise of seamless networks, what makes ILL a better option is the written service level agreement (SLA) that comes with it. This contract safeguards the subscribers against unexpected downtime issues and ensures complete support from the service provider. In case of any failure to deliver the services as per the SLA, compensation is provided to the subscriber.

Understanding an SLA

An SLA is a contract between the ILL service provider and a customer (subscriber), and it defines the level of performance that the service provider is expected to offer. A service provider that does not abide by the SLA may have to deal with disgruntled customers, may lose customers to competitors and may also have to face lawsuits.

According to a market study, one out of three Internet subscribers changed their service provider in search of lower rental plans or better performance. The story is not very different in India where customers are quick to switch their Internet service providers whenever they find a better service package.

To retain their leased line subscribers, companies implement their SLA verifications with the support of a networks engineering team. These engineers have to strategise accurate and effective ways to ensure that subscribers always get the performance that they were promised in the SLA agreement.

Most of the SLA metrics are about the quality of solutions to be delivered by the service provider. As regards an ILL that is more of a product than a service, these metrics include carrier-grade connectivity, access to an extensive last-mile network for offices in any part of the country, unlimited data, high bandwidth that is not shared with anyone and the monitoring of jitter and latency.

Any errors in deliverables are recorded, and the service provider must compensate for them as per the terms of SLA.

Why One Must Insist on an SLA

An SLA is a blueprint of the services that the ILL provider offers to its client.

With an SLA, an organisation can ensure that it is on the same page with the ILL service provider regarding standards and support. By documenting the SLA, a business and its network service provider can work through the expectations, and the business can know the value that it will get in return for the subscription fee paid. Under clear, defined and measurable terms, conditions and provisions mentioned in the SLA, the chances of client disappointment are mitigated, and the clients are also aware of the course of action they can take if the service obligations made to them are not honoured.
When you have an SLA with your service provider, they cannot claim ignorance of certain facts if your expectations of the service documented in the draft are not met.

Internet and network service providers usually offer standard SLAs as a part of the agreement. However, while taking a dedicated ILL, you can review all the guidelines and also get them checked by your IT teams to tailor certain points as per your requirements. For instance, if you prefer a higher upload speed and find the offered download speed acceptable, ask the service provider if changes can be made for your business needs.

An ILL SLA may be contained in anything from less than 10 to more than a 100 pages. Its essential components include the service provider’s and client’s goals in providing and receiving the service, a summary of each entity’s responsibilities in providing/using the service and a statement on the agreed duration of the service (subscription period) for the tariff decided upon. It also lists the procedures to monitor actual service levels, a schedule to remediate downtime if any and the measures to resolve any difference of opinions.

With an SLA, you can protect the interests of your organisation and also have a more personalised business relationship with your service provider. There is a mutual understanding on performance standards, clarity on what you will get with an ILL and assurance of a positive experience for the years of service.

Tata Tele Business Services (TTBS) provides detailed SLAs with its ILL connections to each client. You can also review each of the provisions with our team to customise the Internet connectivity and network solutions that you expect for your offices.