

IS YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR A LEASED LINE?

ALTERNATE TITLE – Leased Lines – Are they for you?

As your business adopts new technology, having a reliable Internet connection becomes increasingly important. Broadband providers vie to garner customers by offering greater Internet speed at lower rates. Consequently, leased line suppliers have also lowered their rates considerably. However, they still charge a notch above broadband for their services and hence remain the second choice for Internet connectivity.

While individuals and households opt unequivocally for broadband, larger corporates and businesses opt for leased lines in order to avoid downtime. SMEs and SMBs waver between the two options in their effort to balance the costs and budgets.

We clarify a few broad aspects here to make the decision easier for you.

What Is a Leased Line?

Simply put, a leased line is a dedicated Internet connection. Being dedicated, it offers a constant speed of Internet – you can choose from the various options available – at a fixed bandwidth for upload as well as download. It is a closed-circuit setup between your place of work and the provider's nearest point of service.

What Do Leased Lines Give Your Business?

For one, they give you a steady and constant speed of Internet connectivity, unaffected by the outside traffic. Since it operates in a closed circuit, it is definitely more secured than broadband. You can use your leased line for more than just the Internet connectivity, such as for VoIP, selective data transfer and other purposes, depending on the package your provider offers.

Is a Leased Line the Solution for Your Business?

The answer to this question really depends on four important factors:

The Number of Users: A leased line is said to be viable for businesses that employ 20 or more employees. This is true for two reasons. One, if your business is that big you

will save decent amounts by avoiding downtime. Second, to reduce your employee turnover, you need to provide them with the tools they need to work better – it can be frustrating working in an office with a slow connection. Besides, you also avoid clogging up your lines with unwanted traffic.

Data Volume

If you do not have 20 or more employees but have high volumes of data transfer instead, you may still need a dedicated connection such as a leased line for your business. Broadband providers impose limits on the volume of data you can download or upload as well as the Internet speed, time and the number of users. They juggle these factors to make the connection economically viable for you. A leased line, on the other hand, offers you a dedicated connection at a constant speed with no limits on the volume of data or time. So if your business is one that requires uploading and/or downloading large files or a large number of files, you should consider leased lines.

Data Sensitivity

Leased lines operate in a closed circuit between you and your provider. There is very little chance of hacking since there are no middlemen involved. If your business is such that the data you deal in is classified, sensitive or volatile, you may want to opt for a leased line. You may also want to take a leased line if your business is likely to suffer significantly on account of a possible downtime. Leased lines are far less likely to suffer downtime when compared with other types of Internet connection, although it is not unheard of.

Budget

The last and the most obvious factor is your budget. How much can you invest into your Internet connection and the return you get from this investment in terms of the time saved, the data protection and so forth, is, of course, a major consideration when deciding whether or not to opt for leased lines.

Other Factors to Consider

Apart from the four basic factors mentioned above, there are a few other things to consider when making the decision to switch to leased lines.

The Location and Business Model

Location matters because of proximity to the provider. If you have partners or associates in multiple locations and privacy is a major concern, you may want to take a leased line that provides Internet to all your associates as well as staff. Similarly, if your business model allows your employees to work remotely from home, you may want to offer them leased line connectivity to facilitate a quick and safe transfer of data. However, if the diverse and possibly remote locations are taken into account, this may prove to be a significant investment.

VoIP

One of the criticisms against VoIP is that the equipment often malfunctions. The issue in many cases is not the equipment but the Internet connection, which may slow down at peak times or when you cross your FUP. Leased lines can easily overcome this issue, so if you are using VoIP extensively for your business, you may want to consider a leased line connection.

Cloud Computing

Cloud computing is the perfect solution for businesses that need to store large volumes of data and run many applications over the Internet. Using cloud computing, however, can be an expensive prospect and as such may not be viable for your SME. With cloud computing, all your employees need to be online at the same time and this can slow down your speed considerably. Add to that the fact that there may be other external users on your broadband connection. In this scenario, a downtime of one minute, or even a few seconds, becomes noticeable and can become the difference in striking that all important-deal. You can resolve this issue easily by opting for an uncontended line which will give you a steady speed and eliminate outsiders.

Peak Times

As far as business is concerned, peak times for Internet usage centre around the morning hours when the employees begin logging into their accounts, checking emails or retrieving data, and towards the end of the day when once again the data is transferred to storage and backups are taken. This is also the peak time for individual

users who check their social media and upload/download large media files as they travel to and from work. Sharing a broadband connection at such times can significantly slow you down – not to mention the risk of hacking. A leased line magically erases all these issues.

Summing Up

Leased lines are the next step up after broadband. Though comparatively expensive and considered impractical for small businesses, a dedicated connection is definitely the answer to your prayers if you need a fast and secure connection that will have a minimum downtime. If your business requires uploading and downloading large files – think in terms of gigabytes – or has a large number of employees all accessing the Internet at the same time, it would be wise to consider leased lines. As a suggestion, instead of directly approaching an ISP, you could go to one of the many telecom providers who can scout around on your behalf and get you a good deal. Check your options now.