ReadyNetGo .... News

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TIP OF THE MONTH

Firewalls

Firewalls work in two ways: they keep sensitive data from flowing out and they keep damaging data from flowing in. You can use software firewalls that install directly on a computer or you can use a hardware firewall, a stand-alone device which sits between your router and LAN.

The one thing to remember is that if you have sensitive data that you do not want to share, your best option is to not create a hole that someone can breach. If you don't want your company's financial data getting into the wrong hands, don't put the data on a computer that has an always on internet connec-tion without establishing a high level of security measures.

Firewalls do not replace anti-virus software. Every desktop computer as well as your server should have anti-virus software installed and updated regularly.

Research Access Speeds

comScore Networks provides analyses on internet usage and quality of service. If you would like to learn more about high-speed internet access, visit comScore's site:

http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?id=322

Do You Feel the Need for Speed?

Are you tired of slow internet connections? Does it take forever for some pages to download to your computer? Are you gaining weight because every time you download or upload, you have time to go to the refrigerator? If you answered yes to any of these questions, it may be time for you to switch to a high-speed internet connection.

There are three choices among high speed connections: cable modem, DSL, and Wireless. All three have pros and cons mostly dependent on usage patterns and how much you are willing to spend.

Cable modem – By far the best choice of the three. Cable offers speeds up to 800 Kpbs (kilobits per second) depending on which company provides the service. Average speeds are around 700 kbps. That's a huge difference compared to a 56K dial-up modem.

DSL – Slower than cable modems. Typically, speeds average around 470 kbps with the top speed listed at 760 kbps.

Wireless
Local Wireless - New technology that aims to give rural communities broadband access. A gateway antenna sits atop a large building or tower and transmits an internet signal within a 5-10 mile radius.

Satellite - An option for some especially if you already subscribe

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

1. www.dslreports.com - Excellent site to track your internet connection, learn the lingo, and see what broadband options are available to you in your area.

2. www.etherlinx.com - Information about Local Wireless options.

3. www.nroute.net - Check out the high-speed access available to mass transit travelers in PA.

to the DISH Network for TV reception. Speeds reach up to 500 kbps. <u>Disadvantages:</u> Satellite service is costly and because the signal must travel thousands of miles, there is a distinct delay in Internet traffic which adversely affects certain applications such as streaming video, video conferencing, etc. VPN traffic is given low priority decreasing the speed of that traffic to unusable levels. The satellite providers also discourage LAN connections to their system by only allowing software Internet sharing applications (proprietary) and preventing the use of hardware routers.

Tiered Pricing

Many cable and phone/internet company's offer tiered pricing now to their customers. Although some companies provide one flat rate for high-speed access to all of their customers, three to six pricing levels are gaining momentum. At the high end, premium pricing ($40 to around $150) will give you between 3 and 6 Mbps bandwidth. At the low end, you may pay around $25-$30 for an average speed of 75 kbps. Faster than a dial-up modem and not much more than some dial-up companies already charge (AOL and Earthlink charge $22 and $20 respectively). Keep in mind though, that you can get a dial-up account for as low as $10 a month (great for an account seldom used or as a backup in case your cable or DSL goes down).

How do I choose which is right for me?

If you are confused about which connection is right for you, think about the activities you already engage in and what your short-term plans are. If you are a gamer, someone who uploads and downloads very large files (including graphics), or are more of the "I want it now" crowd, then you'll be more satisfied with as fast a connection as you can afford. If, however, you check email from friends or family, do some online shopping every once in awhile or pay bills online once a month, a slower connection is a good compromise for the cost savings (a $40 month cable modem or DSL bill translates to $480/year).

Security Issues

While high-speed connections are convenient and allow you to optimize your efficiency, there is a downfall to an always on, high –speed connection: increased security risks.

Just like wireless connections (see the February 2003 newsletter), broadband connections are accessible to outsiders who want to view the files on your computer. If someone figures out the IP address of your DSL or cable modem, they could download the contents of your computer in a blink of an eye.

For this reason, it is essential to have a firewall installed along with your cable or DSL modem. If you have already set up a network, most routers/switches have built-in firewalls so you won't need to purchase extra equipment or software. If you have a stand-alone computer though and you have a lot of personal data on your computer, we highly encourage you to install a firewall to inhibit hackers.

High-speed access while traveling

In addition to residential and small business high-speed access, you can now get affordable broadband service while traveling. NRoute has installed high-speed connectivity on Amtrak and Capitol Trailways bus service routes between Harrisburg, Philadelphia and New York. The free service will allow you to access email, shop online, receive news or financial information, and listen to NRoute radio. For a fee you can even watch movies on demand. This is all possible by using geo-positioning and satellite capabilities and a touch screen at every seat. The future of access on demand is here and it's right in your backyard!