



HOW TO CHOOSE A SUPERFAST BROADBAND SUPPLIER



The Internet has transformed business – but whether you are selling online, or simply sending emails and browsing the web, the benefits your business can derive from the Internet are heavily affected by your choice of Internet Service Provider (ISP). Your ISP is the company providing the link that connects you to the Internet. However, if all is not well with your ISP, it can become a painful obstacle, so it's important to make the right choice. There can be substantial differences in the quality of service from ISPs in terms of speed, reliability and customer support, so it's worth taking the time to do some homework first. What should you look for in an ISP? You may need to consider the following factors:

BEING A SUPERFAST BUSINESS

It can be quite common for sole traders or micro businesses to simply use their existing residential broadband if they are working from home. However the connection will often be contended, for example, have you ever been using the Internet and it suddenly starts to go incredibly slow? That is because the rest of the street is using the connection. Switching to business broadband may cost a bit more but you will receive a better, more reliable connection as well as having access to better service levels, technical support and quicker response times to any issues that may arise. Business customers are often afforded better/higher levels of security.

PRICE

As with most things you get what you pay for, and in terms of providing a superior service and connectivity, it is best to check with a selection of suppliers and compare the connection, service, support etc. against each other.

SPEED

Many ISPs heavily publicise the 'bandwidth' that they provide – essentially, the speed of your Internet connection. This is measured in megabits per second, often abbreviated to Mbps. When researching a provider it is worth considering not just download speeds, but the upload speeds too. Residential suppliers advertise their download speeds but a business will need to take into account the upload speeds available to ensure quick file sharing, collaboration and other facilities are accessible. Higher bandwidth means files get sent and received quicker, web pages load faster, and so on. If you are mostly just sending emails and reading web pages, it's not a major factor these days; any ISP will provide sufficient bandwidth for those activities. However, if you are using online video a lot or sending and receiving large files or running data-hungry programs it can become a significant issue.

The exact speed you get depends on a number of additional factors such as the length of your line from the telephone exchange or green roadside cabinet; the line and equipment quality, and internal wiring within your premises. Superfast Cymru is working hard to ensure that everyone gets as fast a speed as possible given their geographical location.





SECURITY

All ISPs occasionally have problems making their service temporarily unavailable. You should ask a prospective provider how often this happens to them by enquiring about their 'uptime' – the percentage of time that the service is working properly. This should be around 99.9%.

SUPPORT

Can you get in touch with someone after working hours, or at the weekend? How long do customers typically spend waiting for a call to be answered? Can you get technical and account questions answered online too?

CHOOSING AN ISP

It's vital to establish clearly how your business uses the Internet today, and how you're likely to use it in the near future. To avoid getting bogged down in detail, it can be a good idea to decide what your top three or four priorities are. This will help you assemble a shortlist of ISPs that meet your needs, and you can then filter them further using less important factors.



TOP TIPS

Your Internet use and bandwidth requirements will probably increase

Ensure that any agreement you set up with an ISP is capable of meeting your needs now AND in the future.

Take performance figures with a pinch of salt

Recognise that the figures quoted by an ISP are usually best-case scenarios, so don't be afraid to ask what bandwidth customers really get on average. Bear in mind that speed can also be affected by the type of cable connecting your premises, i.e. copper, as well as your distance from the exchange.

Don't select an ISP on price alone

Consider what your business could lose if a cheap, but low-quality, ISP left you without a connection for 24 hours.

Watch out for usage limits

Some ISPs may impose limits on the amount of data you can upload or download in a given time period, so ensure that these are significantly above your expected usage levels if you plan to go with such as ISP.

Don't assume big brands are best

Big isn't necessarily beautiful, particularly if a smaller (and perhaps more local) ISP is able to offer a more personalised and responsive service.

Independent reviews

Get more information from websites such as uSwitch: www.uswitch.com/broadband
Moneysupermarket: www.moneysupermarket.com/broadband/business-broadband
and Thinkbroadband: www.thinkbroadband.com





NEXT STEPS

1. Register to attend a fully-funded Business Development Workshop.
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/events
2. Make an appointment to see a Business Advisor who will help you create a personal action plan to grow your business.
www.business.wales.gov.uk/contact-us

For more Superfast Business advice:

See how other businesses in Wales have exploited Superfast Broadband
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/superfast-success-stories

Find out how much your business could save with our
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/savings-calculator

Other business guides that may interest you include:
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