

### Why business broadband?

Why would you want a specialist business broadband package, surely broadband is broadband? It's all the same isn't it? Well no, as a business you have unique needs that set you apart from domestic broadband, maybe you just don't realise it. Let's look at some of the needs that you as a business user have that a domestic user doesn't.

Lets look at the [Advantages of Business broadband](#) and some of the ways you can [enhance the way your business operates using broadband](#). Also worth considering are some of the [extras you might get as well](#).

### Advantages of business broadband

#### *Support*

Nowadays there can't be many businesses that don't rely to some extent on their Internet connection. It's invaluable for research and keeping in touch with your customers via email. Imagine what would happen if you lost your internet connection... work stops, your customers can't contact you, your staff can't operate, you lose money. What kind of support do you get from your domestic broadband supplier in this case? Maybe a premium rate phone line, if you are lucky. What service levels are guaranteed? Look at the small print and it certainly won't be as good as you think. With a business broadband package you will find that you get much greater levels of support, usually a support line where you get an engineer straight away, service level agreements (SLA's) that will guarantee your connection will be fixed within a set period of time, and compensation if these levels are not met. Some deals even come with remote support where an engineer from you provider can take "remote control" of your PC's to solve problems for you. All this gives peace of mind that in problem situations you will get the service and support you can rely upon. Many business packages come with a backup dialup service, so in the case the main broadband connection is inoperable a dialup connection will automatically take over. While dialup is obviously not as fast as a broadband connection, it will work as an emergency measure to ensure you get minimum connectivity to continue with such operations as email and basic web surfing.

#### *Security*

When it is business, security is crucial. Getting a virus on a home computer is annoying, but on a business computer it can be a disaster. Hackers are also of huge concern to businesses. They could steal your valuable proprietary information, take details of your customers, bank and credit card details. Your reputation could be destroyed in the eyes of your customers. Business broadband packages most often come with better security with proactive measures to help ensure that your data and network is much more secure.

### ***Scalability***

With your home broadband package you know that the number of people using the connection isn't going to grow that much, whereas with business you want it to grow and generally the more the better. This means that your connection has to be able to grow with you as you expand in numbers and if you do really well then maybe multiple office sites. Business broadband packages generally come in tiers; once you reach a size where you have outgrown your present package there is an upgrade path that your supplier can help you move to.

### ***Restrictions***

As a business you are more likely to need to use your internet connection to run services that home users are not. This can include things like email servers, web servers and FTP servers. The majority of domestic internet connections make this impossible or very difficult for two reasons; firstly the "ports" that these services run on are routinely blocked by providers to those on domestic packages and secondly to properly run these services you need at least one static IP address. An IP address (or "Internet Protocol" address) is the unique number that corresponds to your internet connection, it's similar in theory to a telephone number in that it allows other computers to connect to services on your connection. Domestic broadband usually allocates a different IP address to you every time you login from a shared pool, which is like having your telephone number always changing, so you can't reliably run services and have people find them. If you ever plan to run any services in-house then you will need static IP addresses and most business plans provide these.

### ***Bandwidth and download speed***

As you may know if you are a heavy internet user, many domestic broadband deals put a cap on the amount of data you may download. Business broadband packages tend to be much more generous in the limits they impose on downloading. Many of the packages actually offer unlimited downloading. On domestic broadband the emphasis is always on download speed and in general a business broadband deal will provide similar if not better speeds. There is also the consideration of "upload" speed with business broadband deals. Upload is when you send data from your computer to an external computer. The most usual place that this happens is when you send an email or if you have a web server. Upload speeds on business deals tend to be faster than those on domestic deals, and the higher specification the deal the faster the upload speed you should expect.

### Ways to enhance your business using broadband

So you have the business broadband connection you need. How can you now take full advantage of it to support and grow your business.

#### ***Connecting remotely***

In the modern business world it is vital to be able to stay in touch with the office when off-site. Key to this is being able to access information that you might have stored on your office network. By using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) you will be able to securely connect to your office network and seamlessly integrate with all your usual systems. This can be useful when working away or even allow the flexibility to provide home working facilities. Many business deals are specifically designed to make it easy to setup a VPN for your company.

#### ***Offsite backup***

Your data is crucial to your business, if it's lost then that's it, business over. To protect your data you make backups, you probably do this already (and if you don't then address it as a priority!) onto tape or disk that you keep locally. But is this the most efficient or reliable way? We'd say not. The best way now that you have your business broadband connection is to do remote backups. This is a service offered by third parties that use your broadband connection at quiet times (such as overnight) to backup your computers securely over the internet to their computers on a remote site. No more forgetting to put the backup tapes in, or tapes getting chewed. You now can rest assured knowing your data is routinely backed up and safely stored.

#### ***Voice Over IP (VOIP)***

One of the most talked about technologies recently is Voice over IP or VOIP. This allows you to make cut price (and in some cases even free) phone calls using your broadband connection. See our [VOIP guide](#) for a full details of how this works and the savings you can make.

### ***Collaborative working***

Now you have your connected business with your staff being able to connect both in the office and externally, an important productivity booster can be using the right collaborative systems to allow your people to work together as a team no matter where they are. You need to consider systems that allow you to share files and folders, shared calendaring systems so you can plan meetings and combine schedules, project management systems, tracking systems. The options are endless depending upon your business sector, but getting the right systems in place can transform your effectiveness.

### **Extras you might get as well**

In a business broadband package there are usually a few extras you might get as well. Some are worth more than others, but here is a list of some you might find included in your deal:

#### ***Equipment***

Quite often you will be provided with equipment such as routers. You can usually use your own equipment if you prefer, but in some cases this may mean that you can't utilise all of a deal's features (such as the integrated mobile phone and VOIP deals that some providers offer). Any router should come with a built in firewall, we wouldn't suggest using any router that does not come with one.

#### ***Web space***

Most deals come with a certain amount of web space. This is usually quite basic in terms of it's offering and can generally only support basic static style websites.

#### ***Email packages***

It is normal to find some kind of email provision thrown in. This can start at 1 basic email account and go right up to sophisticated multi-mailbox systems with web mail additions.

#### ***Other Software***

You might find some collaboration software bundled in with your package or spam management software. Some of the free software can be useful, sometimes it is just there to make the list of features on a package longer.

## Domain name registration

If you don't have a domain name (the domain name is the web address for your company, ours is [www.broadband.co.uk](http://www.broadband.co.uk)) registered for your company yet then some deals offer to register your chosen domain (assuming it is available) for free.

## Final Checklist

When choosing the business broadband deal for your company here are the main items to look out for:

Item	Domestic broadband	Business broadband
<b>Support</b>	Quite often email or premium rate phone line	Usually dedicated business support staff available
<b>Service Level Agreement</b>	Very rare	Normal to be included
<b>Security</b>	Varies from none to free virus checkers	Usually included
<b>Scalability</b>	Not designed to scale as a business grows	Most suppliers have a range of packages and will help you upgrade as your business grows.
<b>Ports blocked</b>	Restrictions are usually routinely placed on ports	Usually all ports are open
<b>Static IP addresses</b>	Not on most packages	Normally provided
<b>VPN</b>	Not on most packages	Many packages build provision in.
<b>Dialup backup</b>	Not on most packages	Many packages build provision in.

Whatever the size of your business, a specialist business broadband package is really an essential addition to your toolkit. Relying on a domestic package even for a small home based operation can leave you open to continuity problems if there are problems with the connection and as you get to larger sized businesses you just have to have a higher level of service and capability.

Remember here at [broadband.co.uk](http://broadband.co.uk) we can help you find business broadband deals using our [broadband availability checker](#), happy deal hunting!