



**BUSINESS**

# Your guide to connectivity

How to grow your business, keep your staff happy and adapt to change (all without breaking a sweat).





# Inside this guide

Jargon, unjargoned	4
What does it mean to be connected?	5

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## Where do I start?

Ultrafast broadband	7
The Cloud	9
VoIP	11
Managed Internet Access	13
Mobile field services	14

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## How your business benefits:

1. Improve your customer experience	16
2. Grow your business	17
3. Empower your staff	18
4. Future-proof your business	19
5. Set yourself apart	20



A close-up photograph of a person's hand plugging a grey Ethernet cable into a blue network switch. The switch has several ports, with numbers 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 visible above the ports. The background is blurred, showing other network equipment.

## SECTION 1

# Getting started

Let's dive in.



# Jargon, unjargoned

The most regularly talked about connectivity terms, with a simple explanation. Easy.

## App

Any type of program that runs on your smartphone, tablet, or device.

## Authentication

The way computer systems verify your identity.

## Bandwidth

The amount of information an internet connection can handle at once.

## Broadband

A high speed internet connection.

## Cable broadband

A fibre optic connection to the internet, which is faster than 4G or ADSL.

## Chatbot

A computer that simulates human conversation and communication.

## Downloads

Transferring a file or program from one computer system to another.

## Encryption

A method of scrambling data to make it unreadable to people who aren't trusted.

## Ethernet

An easy way to connect computers over a network by cable.

## Fibre optic broadband

A connection using plastic or glass cables to send data faster than standard copper wires.

## Firewall

A protective measure that filters and stops malicious communications being sent to your computer.

## Gigabyte (GB)

Describes the size of computer files and memory capacity. There are 1000 bytes in a kilobyte (KB), 1000 kilobytes in a megabyte (MB), and 1000 megabytes in a gigabyte.

## The Internet of Things (IoT)

The ability to connect to everyday objects over the internet.

## IP (Internet Protocol) address

The unique address assigned to your computer online.

## ISP (Internet Service Provider)

The company providing you with your connection.

## Megabyte (MB)

Describes the size of computer files and storage capacity. 1MB equals 1,000KB (or sometimes 1,024KB).

## Mobile broadband

Broadband access through 4G USB technology for access on the go.

## Router

A device to create a connection between computers.

## Server

A device running a program dedicated to managing network resources.

## Streaming

Watching or listening to content online (as a constant stream) without downloading it to your computer.

## Uploads

Moving files or programs from your computer to a central server.

## VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)

The ability to make calls over your internet connection.

## VPN (Virtual Private Network)

A service hiding your identity online by routing your traffic through a proxy server.

## WiFi

Wireless internet.

# What does it mean to be connected?

## Connecting with people is a basic human need

And for business it's essential because those humans are your team, suppliers, clients and customers.

## Connectivity is just the tech that helps you do that

And with the right connectivity you can make your team more productive, your customers happier and your business more profitable.

## No brainer, right?

If you're wondering where to start, that's why we've created this guide.

First, we'll explain how you can get connected by looking at five technologies you should know all about. Then, we'll look at the why's.



Keep a look out for this icon throughout. It's where you'll find the top tips to keep you ahead of the rest.





A man and a woman are sitting at a wooden table in a modern office. The man, on the left, is wearing a blue shirt and a watch, and is holding a white mug. The woman, on the right, is wearing a white blazer and glasses, and is looking at a laptop. They appear to be in a meeting or discussion. The background is a bright, open-plan office with glass partitions and bookshelves.

**SECTION 2**

# Where do I start?

Five places to begin your journey.

# Ultrafast broadband



## 1. Ready for business?

If you want to put your broadband through company accounts (and take advantage of added customer service, reduced downtime and increased security) you'll need business broadband – even if you work from home.

Consider the speed and price of your service. Don't cut corners, in case you end up losing money down the line.

Make sure you also check the SLA (service level agreements) cover what your provider guarantees to give you. How quickly are faults repaired? How easy is it to speak to someone?



## 2. Static or dynamic IP?

An IP address is a number your provider uses to identify your device and your connection. If your IP is dynamic, this changes every time you log on.

So why would you want a static IP (one that doesn't change)? Well, if you want to host your own website, it helps if your IP doesn't change (so the rest of the internet can find you). It also gives you more control over your email<sup>1</sup>.

Most personal use is dynamic and it works fine. But if you need that extra control it will cost a bit more and there's some set-up needed – but well worth the investment.





### Top tip: Get the most from your broadband

Here are some handy tips you can follow to make sure your internet is as speedy as can be:

- Make sure all cables are fully and securely plugged into the back of your router.
- Download anything that isn't essential to your business in the early hours of the morning, instead of at peak times.
- Use an Ethernet cable to connect your router and any devices that will support it.
- Check that your router isn't obstructed by large furniture or fish tanks (sorry, Nemo, no more streaming for you!).
- Move your router off the floor.
- Update your devices to make sure they have the latest wireless capabilities.



### Top tip: How to test your connection speed

To check how speedy your connection is – or isn't – simply visit [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net). In a matter of minutes, you'll receive stats for your:

- Ping: The reaction time of your connection. The faster, the better.
- Download speed: How quickly data can be downloaded from the internet to your device.
- Upload speed: How quickly data can be uploaded from your device to the internet.



# The Cloud

The Cloud doesn't actually exist. It's just a way to describe renting space on giant servers accessed over the internet. (Rather than storing data on your own servers.) You're probably already doing it through Hotmail, Gmail, Skype, PayPal or Dropbox.

Here's why.



## Save money

Let someone else's servers do the work while you access the same apps and services – from Dropbox Business to Outlook 365 – that your larger competitors use. These cloud tools can even replace the apps you have on your server, saving on upfront and maintenance costs while allowing your people to access, edit and share files from anywhere.

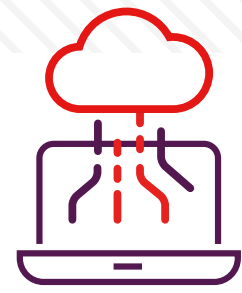


## Keep your data safe

The Cloud is made up of massive sets of servers – all with industrial levels of security. So it keeps your business secure, while nailing those industry regulations, without the worry or effort.







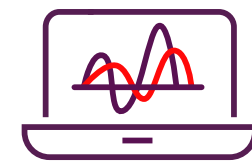
**Take the work out of teamwork**

It makes collaboration with colleagues, customers or suppliers easy because if your data's in the Cloud, it's accessible anytime, anywhere, from any device.



**Tick off tedious tasks**

Better access to your data, thanks to a great connection, means you can send invoices, book appointments, much more – even on the go.



**Make better decisions**

Cloud apps are designed to integrate with each other, usually through handy dashboards. That gives you more useful data. And that helps you make better decisions.<sup>2</sup>

You get more analytics, without the worry of data protection. And the more you know about your customers, the better the service you can provide.



**Top tip: Collaborate in the Cloud**

Office365 gives you everything you'd expect from Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) on the go. So you can start writing an email on your mobile while you walk, add slides into a presentation on your tablet on the train, and attach the document to that email on your laptop from the comfort of your favourite café.

Then there's Dropbox Business, which allows you to share data easily with colleagues, partners, suppliers and contractors – and keep track of it.

**Find out more [here](#).**



# VoIP



If you haven't heard of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol – or making calls over the internet instead of using telephone wires) you soon will. Not least, because BT are set to switch analogue lines off in 2025<sup>3</sup>.

If you're making calls over the internet, you'll need a good connection. As a rough rule of thumb, you may need an extra 40% on top of what you're currently using. (But obviously this depends on your number of users and your internet usage.) But it could transform your business meetings.

Crystal clear conference and video calls, with everyone sharing ideas and marking them up on the same document, all for less than that scratchy spider phone!

There are two ways to do it.

## **1. You can run VoIP in the Cloud**

It's more flexible and scalable, doesn't need any on-going maintenance or in-house expertise and it lets you add and remove users without hardware changes. Even better, all internal calls (even if some of your team are based overseas) are free. Maybe that's why 75% of SMEs choose this route.

## **2. Or, you can run it in-house**

For some, total control is essential. You can keep the servers in your office and do the tech support and maintenance yourself. If you haven't already got the kit, your upfront costs will increase, but it makes sense if you've already invested in hardware (your switchboard for example). And it means everything is exactly as you want it.



**The benefits:**

- Save as much as 50% on your call costs with VoIP<sup>4</sup>.
- Host media-rich meetings with anyone, anywhere, using video and document sharing.
- Become more agile – add just the exact number of extensions you need.
- Carry your landline with you and stay connected from anywhere with WiFi.



**Top tip: Training does the trick**

VoIP often comes with a wide range of great features, but your system is only as good as the staff running it – and employees who know the ins and outs are better equipped.

So, to get the most from your team, take the time to make sure they have a basic understanding of how the hardware, software, and the data flow works.

Think about training voice and data staff to communicate and work together when they need to, encourage questions, and even test employees after training.





# Managed Internet Access

There comes a time when the internet you've been using since there were three of you, isn't going to cut it anymore.

VoIP, cloud apps and video are brilliant business tools, but they all eat up your bandwidth. If you've expanded (either in people, or the service you're offering) you don't want slow-downs.

## That's where Managed Internet Access comes in.

It's our version of a leased line (which is a private internet connection that's not shared with wider internet traffic).

## Internet access that's all your own

You'll have a line that's dedicated to you, and uncontended, so you don't have to share bandwidth with anyone else.<sup>5</sup>

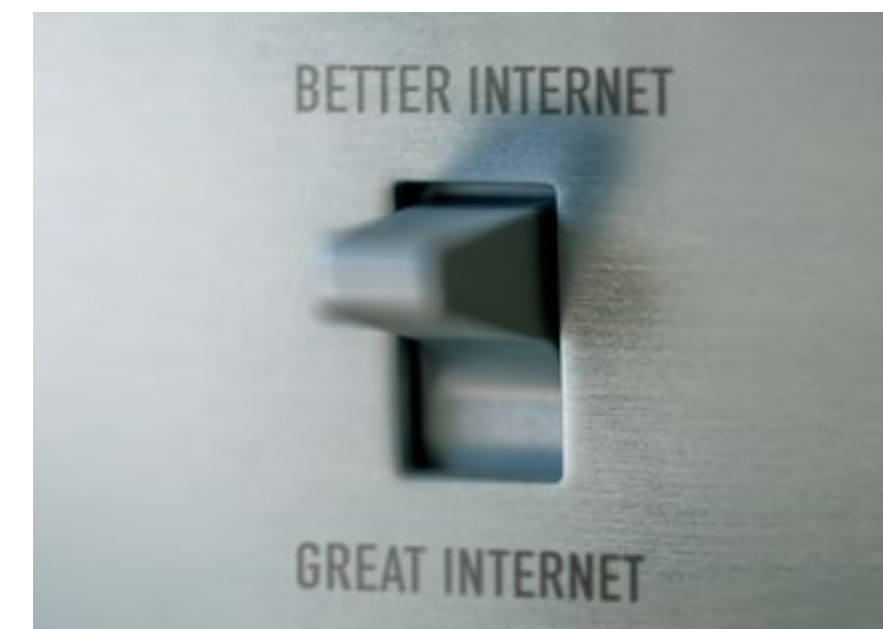
## Symmetrical connectivity

Which means that suddenly uploading is as fast as downloading. Essential if, for example, lots of your team are using VoIP at the same time, you're uploading huge files to the Cloud or streaming video for your customers.

And as you're not sharing your bandwidth with anyone, there's no issue of slow-downs at peak times (or any other times). Video buffering? Not anymore.

## But is it for you?

It is more expensive. But for larger companies or those where internet is business critical, it's essential. And the extra cost is nothing compared to the salaries of those not working to their full potential.<sup>6</sup>



## Top tip: Consider the power of video

With a stronger internet connection, it gives you the opportunity to tap into using video.

It's more shareable – and often more engaging – than text. It's a proven lead generator. It's perfect for your website and using in social networks. And it's well-suited to 'how-to' videos that demonstrate how to use your product, saving you from being inundated with questions or training costs.

Plus, video conferencing could transform the way your business brings disparate teams together.



# Mobile field services

Often shortened to MFS, mobile field services covers all the apps you can give your team out in the field.

It lets you (and your customers) track technicians, deliveries, vehicles – and it lets you know the status of each job and what everyone's up to. Plus it gives them all the tools they need while out on the road.

## More than just a work phone

The mobile business applications market is expected to nearly double from \$31 billion in 2012 to \$61 billion in 2018<sup>7</sup>. And rather than more general apps, the market's moving towards more industry specific, or even business specific ones.

## In fact, the potential rewards are huge

MFS leaders (those who make the most of mobile tech on the go) enjoy 20% greater customer satisfaction rates – that's right across their clientele. Plus, they got 46% higher first-time fix rates, as well as more than twice the annual improvement in technician productivity.

Leaders also took an average of 27 hours to complete a job, compared to a 36-hour industry average<sup>8</sup>.

## Real-time results

You can also share accurate information across teams, know exactly where every worker and vehicle is (and what they're doing) and measure their performance. All in real-time.



## Top tip: Don't get left behind on the platform

When using a mobile field service app, make sure it works across multiple operating systems; there's no point getting an app that works for the half of the team on Android, but not the half on Windows or iOS.

It's a tricky situation exacerbated by bring your own device policies, where there is no 'default' platform in a business – people can be picky about what type of device they're used to.

So, always check with the vendor that apps run cross-platform, and consider testing it across a range of platforms before committing to it.





SECTION 3

# How your business benefits

Improve your connectivity and  
enjoy these five easy wins.



# 1 Grow your business



73% of small business owners plan to grow their business over the next 2-3 years.

**Here's how they expect to do it:**

81%

Increasing workforce skills

68%

Exploiting new markets

64%

Improving the leadership abilities of their managers

58%

Launching new products or services

54%

Through capital investment<sup>9</sup>

Getting improved connection can help tick a lot of these boxes. You can work faster and more effectively, improve collaboration throughout your business and reduce time to market – and you'll naturally create a culture of innovation too.

**Ace your digital marketing**

It's cost-effective and if you're not looking at marketing your company digitally, you really should. Improving your broadband speed means you can do more with your online marketing (such as social and videos) and create intimate bonds with customers, right where they are.

**Plus there are unexpected savings...**

Using the internet for calls (see VoIP, p11) means your phone number isn't tied to where you are. Add ultrafast internet and you don't need centrally-based offices to be at the centre of things<sup>10</sup>, thanks to the magic of remote working.



## 2 Improve your customer experience



Today's customers expect more from your business than ever before. Are you offering innovative services to stand out? (Especially when your competitors are just a click, tap or swipe away.)

### The experience economy

There's a huge shift towards businesses charging customers for rich experiences rather than just goods or services. Think Disneyland, where the parking and food are the goods, the rides the services – but customers are really paying for the memories.

A good way to dip a toe into the experience economy is just to imagine what you'd do differently if you charged admission. Basically, you'd need to up your game.

### Give your customers rich experiences

Can you provide content in a more engaging way? Or offer services that will streamline their lives? How about providing totally secure, free WiFi while they wait?

This is one of the reasons why 55% of SMEs are investing in mobile field services<sup>11</sup> (find out more on page 14). Often, to deliver these experiences properly you'll need wider bandwidth and better connectivity.<sup>12</sup>

You can also stand out from your competitors by offering things like 24/7 customer support, thanks to things like chatbots. And you can reach customers in new ways, like mobile, which is simpler for them and often cheaper for you.

So, in fact, everyone wins.



# 3 Empower your staff



Your staff can get more done when they're better connected.

If your video conferencing is up to scratch, you can save them time wasted on travelling to meetings. Add cloud business apps and everyone can make changes on one document they're discussing, miles apart.

Mobile business apps can make home workers just as productive as those in the office. And technology can shrink the time your team spend on boring admin tasks.

## Attract talent (keep them and reap the rewards)

42% of millennials would consider quitting a job where the tech wasn't up to their standards. 81% say the technology available influences whether they'd take a job. And – happily for you – 29% of millennials say they do their best work outside the office.

So investing in tech – and making mobile working simple – will help you attract (and keep) the best new talent. And being able to access the services and apps they need to do their jobs faster, will massively improve your productivity.



# 4 Future-proof your business



As well as improving your existing business, your connection can open up a whole host of new opportunities and pioneering developments.

### Like... the Internet of Things (IoT)

The IoT is about connecting devices over the internet, letting them talk to us, applications, and each other. For example, think smartphones that learn your schedule and can have the best route mapped out for you, before you even leave the house.

Only 6% of SMEs<sup>13</sup> have dabbled with IoT, so far. System development, integration costs, implementation time and lack of experience are all barriers. But Aberdeen Research Group found that organisations who upgraded

their network infrastructures first, overcame them – and got the most from their investment.

### Improve your analytics, reduce downtime and grow

Businesses using the IoT have to handle small amounts of traffic from thousands of devices – and act on that information.

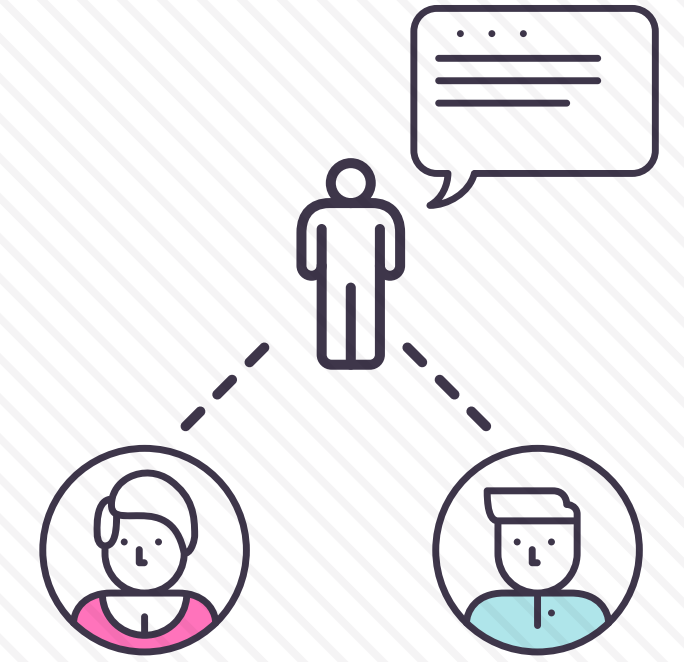
Which means that IoT-optimised networks are six times more likely to have on-demand performance information and real-time analytics. And five times more likely to have

predictive analytics<sup>14</sup>. Helping you with order fulfilment and customer insight, can lead to improved customer service and loyalty, helping your business grow.

It's a great example of how the demands of a new technology can improve all aspects of your business.



# 5 Set yourself apart



In 2014, 56% of SME employers saw competition as an obstacle to business success – 12% saw it as their main obstacle<sup>15</sup>.

### Technology can help you offer a standout service

Take the guesswork out of appointments and deliveries with real-time tracking. Collaborating with clients on projects is simple: work on one document together and chat through changes, even if you're continents apart.

### A high-tech no-brainer

Combining ultrafast internet with cloud apps means you can serve your customers quicker and more effectively than the competition. The Cloud also gives you access to the same services and apps that your larger competitors use. And you can deliver innovations faster.

Put these together and you can grow to become a big player in your market.



# Ready to get started?

Better connectivity lets you offer even more to your customers, makes life easier for your team and helps you grow.

Find out more:  
[virginmediabusiness.co.uk/small-business](https://virginmediabusiness.co.uk/small-business)

Or just give us a call on:

**0808 231 7013**

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