



# Broadband ISPs

How to Choose Your Provider

# The Criteria – Hard Factors

- Speed
- Upload / download limit
- Contention ratio
- Cost
- Features
- Static or Dynamic IP
- Contract type

# The Criteria – Soft Factors

- Support
- Reliability
- Other Factors

# Connection Speed

- Is 256Kb Broadband?
- 512Kb – 10 times faster than dialup
- 1Mb – 20 times faster than dialup
- 2Mb – 40 times faster than dialup

# Speed – a translation

- AVG Free is 10MB or 80Mb or 80000Kb
- Dialup @ 25Kb per sec = 53.3 minutes
- Dialup @ 40Kb per sec = 33.3 minutes
  
- 512Kb Broadband = 2.6 minutes
- 1Mb Broadband = 1.3 minutes
- 2Mb Broadband = .66 minutes (40 secs)

# Speed – the final decider

- To free up a telephone line – 256Kb
- To experience true broadband – 512Kb
- If your life depends on it – 1Mb or 2Mb
  
- Location – you may be limited to 512Kb
- Cost – we'll get to that!

# Download Limit – BT guide

<b>Online Activity</b>	<b>1GB</b>	<b>15GB</b>
Surfing	2 hrs a day	15 hrs a day
Sending JPEGs	30 per week	250 per week
Receiving JPEGs	30 per week	250 per week
Music	5 tracks a week	250 tracks
Video	5 x 2mins a wk	3hrs a week
Online Radio	2 hrs a week	15 hrs a week
Send email	100 per week	3000 per week
Receiving email	100 per week	3000 per week

# Contention Ratio

- What is contention?
- The theoretical number of people sharing your bandwidth – so a 50:1 contention could reduce your 512Kb to 10Kb when busy!
- BUT – It won't happen in reality!
- Home packages are 50:1
- Business packages are 20:1

# Cost

- Can be as low as £14.99 per month
- Can be as high as £75 per month
- Don't select on basis of cost first
  
- Costs will continue to fall
- Speeds will be increased

# ISP Added Features

- Email addresses – usually 3+
- Email virus check
- Web space – from 5MB to 1GB
- Free Modem – Do you really need it?
- Free Microfilters – 2 only
  
- Static or Dynamic IP address
- Uncapped download / upload limit

# Contract Type

## ■ Annual

- Hard to get out of
- More likely to come with freebies
- Consumer focussed

## ■ Monthly

- Easy to switch
- No freebies
- Business focussed

# Soft Factors

## ■ Customer Support

- How measured
- How much of the process does the ISP own?
  - Your equipment – how do you test?
  - BT connection to your home
  - BT connection at the exchange
  - ISP connection to the internet
- Does the ISP own the problem for you?
  - Increasing tendency to blame BT or the equipment, especially if you install your own

# Reliability

- They're all the same aren't they?
- Well they all buy from BT anyway
- Does the ISP manage it's own connection to the Internet?
- Does it buy the service from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party?
- Check the online guides

# Other Factors

- Proprietary software
  - AOL, BT Yahoo
- Migration Fees
  - If you decide to move will you be charged?
  - Will your current provider help (or hinder)?
- Regrade Fees
  - If you decide to upgrade (or downgrade) will you be charged?
  - The regrade may be speed or bandwidth related

# Resources on the Web

- ISP Home Pages
  - If there's a lot of tiny print, move on
  - If there's a forum, read the comments
  - If there is no forum, Google for it!
- ADSL Guide – [www.adslguide.org.uk](http://www.adslguide.org.uk)
- Forums – <http://bbs.adslguide.org.uk>

# Recommendations

- Based on my customers and my own experiences
- Not cost driven
- Focussed on level of support
- Reliability
- ISPs ownership of problems

# The Don't Go There List...

## ■ AOL

- Unreliable connection
- Web based help useless unless you use AOL software
- Tier 1 support is a barrier to real help
- Completely uncaring support staff
- Proprietary software

## ■ Supanet

- Foisted on Time / Tiny customers like it or not – this more a dialup issue than broadband

# The OK most of the time list

- BT

- But beware the BT Yahoo desktop takeover!

- Tiscali

- Excellent web help but hopeless telephone support

- Virgin

- Wanadoo

# The Good Folk

- Zen Internet

- My own ISP, chosen on the basis of reviews, not cost, they are relatively expensive!

- Pipex

- PlusNet

- Demon

- Eclipse

- HotChilli

# Any Questions?

(or comments regarding my slanderous view of your favourite ISP)