

The Communicator

vol. 1
no. 4

A Monthly Telecommunications Update from RAM Communications

INTERNET SERVICES. WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU BUSINESS? PART II

In our last installment we highlighted the pros and cons of DSL internet service. In this round we move on to T1-based internet service. The first and most important difference between DSL and T1 service is the medium by which each service is delivered.

DSL service runs over twisted copper pair or regular phone line. T1 service resides on a closed digital circuit into a dedicated router. Unlike DSL, T1 service is a private, secured medium. A T1 connection is therefore more secure from hackers and provides a higher level of performance than DSL. In fact T1 is so secure, internet providers guarantee its level of performance. T1 internet subscribers enjoy 24x7 service monitoring and credits for any service outages. There are no such guarantees offered with DSL.

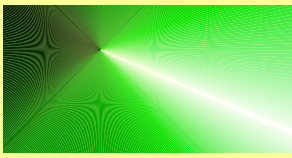
If your business requires an internet connection that is always on with a predictable level of performance, T1 service is the only choice. Some internet service providers, or ISP's, have developed very sophisticated routing schemes for their T1 service. In other words, internet traffic can be sent over different networks in case the primary network has a service outage. For the foreseeable future T1 appears to be the internet choice for all business needs. As T1 service has become more affordable, smaller businesses have an even bigger incentive to invest in T1.

RAM TIP: BASIC REDUNDANCY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Redundancy planning is sort of like insurance planning. No one wants to pay for it, but being left without it puts your business at risk. Telecom services are highly reliable, however having a backup service in place will help your business get through any outages or difficulties that may come along the way. Here are several different service scenarios and some recommended backups for each one.

1. **Basic analog lines** : analog service is the oldest, most basic and probably most reliable service available. There are times, however, when weather or occasional construction crews can wreak havoc. RAM recommends that for every ten lines used with carrier A, consider installing two more lines from carrier B. RAM can help you program automatic call forwarding to carrier B if carrier A should ever have a service interruption.
2. **PRI service** : PRI is much more sophisticated and robust than analog service; however, because it is digital service, PRI also has a lower tolerance for weather and adverse electrical conditions. Therefore, we highly recommend that you consider incorporating at least four analog lines as a backup measure. Like the first example, your service provider can program inbound calls to automatically forward to your analog service in the event of an outage.
3. **Internet T1** : Internet T1 is also highly reliable; however if your company has a large web presence or internet requirement, you should also consider a basic backup service. Both DSL and dial-up are economical insurance plans if you ever have a complete T1 failure. For mission critical internet needs, we highly recommend Internap. For those of you who recall our last issue, Internap provides two redundant paths from the customer premises to their network interface. Additionally this ISP has nine additional networks for traffic in case of outages or network congestion. Surprisingly, Internap's monthly cost is not much higher than comparable single T1 services.

While there are no guarantees, having a redundancy plan in place can mean the difference between having some productivity as opposed to none at all. Please call RAM if you have any further questions.



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TROUBLE REPORTING: THE DIFFERENCE IS IN THE DETAILS

As many of you know by now, we encourage you to call RAM first in the event your business has any service issues. There are some basic parameters we would like you to keep in mind when opening trouble tickets. These pointers will definitely save you and your service provider time and aggravation.

1. **Be specific** : we completely understand a service outage or difficulty can be stressful and inconvenient, however we need specific call examples or circumstances in order to take care of the problem as quickly as possible. For example, if a client calls and says, "Our FAX number 355-1000 has no dial tone. We first noticed the problem today at 10:30 a.m.,.....", we now have specific information to provide for the telco. As obvious as this next example may seem, when a client calls and states, "My phone doesn't work", we have very little information to go on for problem solving.
2. **Make a list** : if possible create a list of symptoms or trends your employees have noted regarding the problem. Many times we can determine the cause of a problem based on the peculiarities documented. For example, if a client dials a number and hears a pattern of electronic tones we can conclude there is a restriction in the phone system NOT the phone service. On the other hand, if a client dials a call and hears a pre-recorded operator message like, "The number you are trying to reach....", we can conclude there is an issue with the phone company. These simple observations save a lot of time in solving a service issue.
3. **Be available** : as inconvenient as it may seem service technicians need to be able to contact a client after a trouble ticket has been issued. Technicians may need your help performing tests in order to resolve your issue. Many service issues can be fixed remotely by the phone company when the client is available for test calls.

Like your doctor or auto mechanic, telecom technicians can solve your problems quickly and easily when you can provide clear, concise information. As always, we appreciate your time and cooperation when circumstances arise.

NEW PRODUCT FEATURE: FOCAL'S IVAD

Like several other service providers, Focal offers an integrated voice/internet package for business customers. Focal's latest offering, called IVAD, carries a unique twist on the bundled service theme. Focal has realized the ever-increasing demand for internet bandwidth among customers. Focal's IVAD product uses burstable internet technology. In laymen's terms, the Focal router acts as a traffic cop monitoring voice and internet activity. In real time, the router allows more internet bandwidth as voice traffic declines. This feature allows users to have the maximum internet bandwidth available at all times. Other voice/internet products force clients to choose a specific internet bandwidth, which cannot be easily changed. In other words, if the client chooses six internet channels, no more are readily available. For more information on Focal IVAD, call RAM today.

ACRONYM CORNER

DSL	Digital Subscriber Line
MRC	Monthly Recurring Charge (monthly charge for equipment)
NRC	Non-Recurring Charge (i.e. one-time installation fee)
DID	Direct Inward Dial (direct phone numbers for personnel)
NAD	Network Access Device (i.e. router)
BTN	Billing Telephone Number (i.e. main number)