

The Small Business Communications Dilemma

Small business owners make decisions every day that affect whether they succeed or fail. In addition to decisions about their core business, they are deciding how best to expand their business, how to allow greater employee flexibility, how to communicate more effectively with their customers, and how to secure company assets or even plan for potential disaster.

Most small businesses do not have the on-site technical staff and as technologies become more complex, many business owners are challenged to comprehend and evaluate new offerings designed to help their businesses. Some may choose to hire IT specialists or rely on the services of an outside company to help them. Whether business owners make these decisions on their own or rely on others with more technology expertise, these are some of the critical questions that should be considered in determining the most appropriate technologies for the business:

- Are we building a new communications network, or expanding an existing network?
- What business problems are we trying to solve with the communications network?
- Will the business need help in building or expanding the network, and if so, where can it obtain the expertise?
- How quickly do we expect the business to grow, and how much expansion or flexibility do we need to plan for?
- What applications can make my business more efficient or more competitive?
- How much will the communications network or new technology cost, both in terms of equipment and on-going services?

For a small business owner trying to answer these questions, the **Linksys Connected Office** provides robust, flexible, cost effective solutions to meet their needs. Linksys Connected Office provides the broadest portfolio of products and solutions specifically designed for the Small Business.

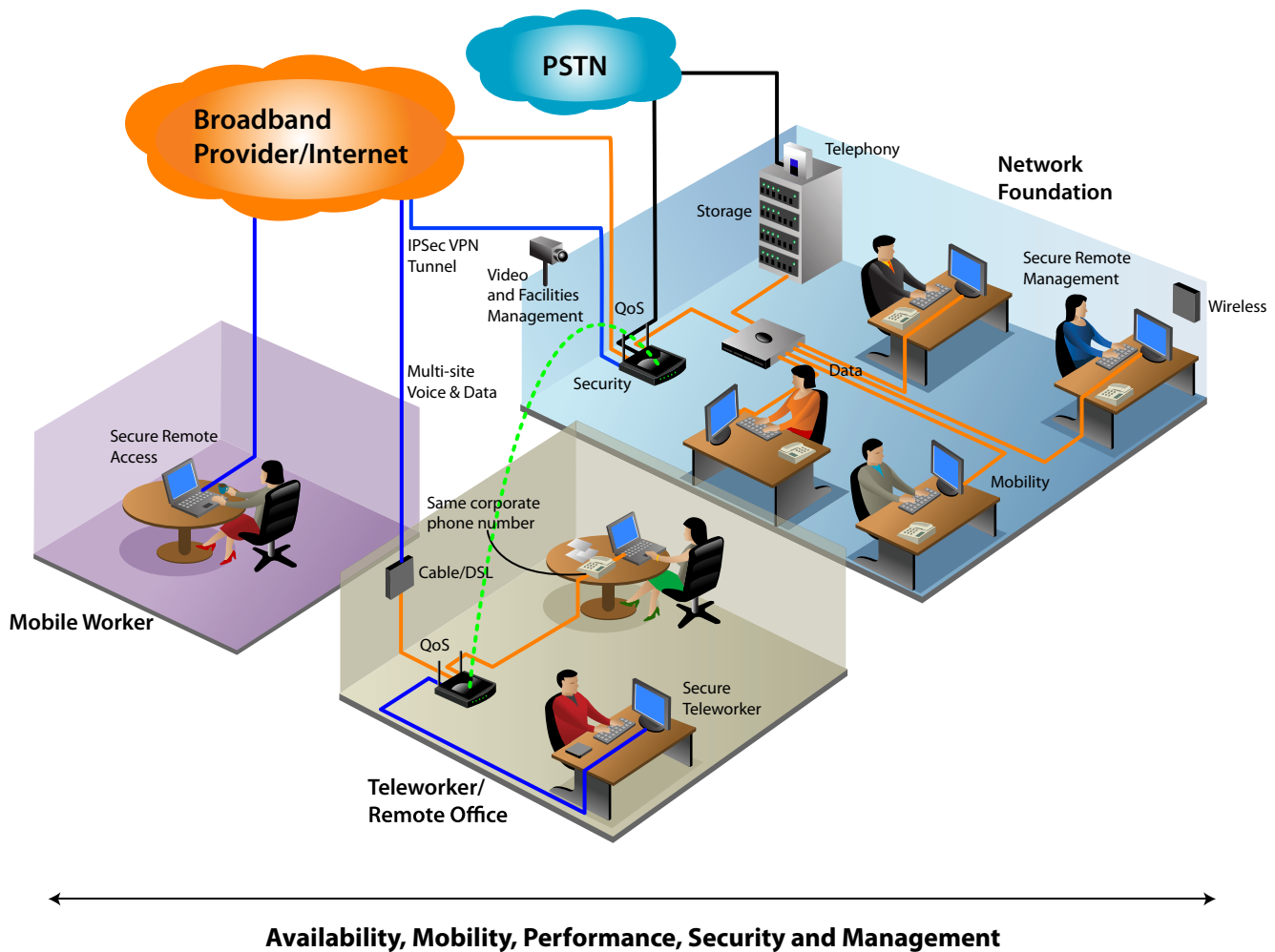
The Linksys Connected Office

Unlike products and systems designed for large enterprises or off-the-shelf items for the home, Linksys Connected Office offers complete technology solutions specifically designed for the Data, Voice, Wireless, Security, Mobility, Video and Storage needs of a small business. Whether a small business is looking to add best-in-class products to an existing network, a network-enabled application, or a complete communications platform, Linksys Connected Office provides the right products or solutions for any small business need (Figure 1).

The Linksys Connected Office portfolio includes:

- **Linksys Business Series** 'best-in-class' data networking and communication technology products includes routers, switches, storage, surveillance, indoor and outdoor wireless devices, the Linksys Voice System (LVS), a solution for small business voice; as well as products that are Linksys One Ready for inclusion in a Linksys One network.
- **Linksys One** is a complete communications solution offered through Hosted Solution Providers (HSPs) that provides voice, data, video, wireless and storage capabilities designed to work together so they are easier to deploy, operate and manage.

Figure 1 – Linksys Connected Office



The Connected Office Strategy

Linksys Connected Office provides the framework for the most flexible, robust, and cost-effective portfolio of products designed specifically for the Small Business. Unlike products and systems that were designed for either large companies or home usage, the Linksys Connected Office strategy is to deliver a complete system for the Data, Voice, Wireless, Security, Mobility, Video and Storage needs of a Small Business.

Linksys Connected Office makes the Small Business owner the center of attention, by focusing on their most critical communication challenges. The portfolio not only helps solve technology challenges, but it's been designed to allow the Small Business owner to choose the model to obtain, build and manage their communications network to best fit the needs of their business.

Communication Solutions for Small Business

The communication network needs of Small Business are among the most varied of any market segment. Some need the most basic of services, such as telephone dial-tone, Internet access and computer backup. Others need the ability to have a "virtual" workforce that is globally reachable and access to the latest web-based applications. Tens of thousands of small businesses have requirements somewhere in between. They all strive to use technology to remain competitive with larger companies, but are often challenged by the cost and complexity of the systems needed to solve their communication challenges.

Small business owners must also decide how they will obtain, build and maintain their communications network, since few have dedicated IT expertise in-house. Will they build and manage the system themselves, or will they seek the experience of outside resources, such as Consultants, Resellers/VARs or Solution Providers, to offload that skill set? By leveraging the expertise of a Reseller/VAR, or the network and services of a Solution Provider, small business owners can choose the expertise that best fits their needs and their budget. They may choose to work with a VAR/Reseller to determine their initial needs and obtain the necessary products. They might also look to extend this initial relationship into a long-term business partnership that allows the VAR/Reseller to help guide the small business through periods of growth or change that affects their communications network. Finally, the Small Business might decide that they would benefit from having their communications network actively managed and monitored to ensure optimal performance. These services could be obtained through a Managed Service or Hosted Solution Provider, and would leverage not only the Providers expertise, but also the broad reach of their voice and data networks.

Once a small business owner has identified their business communications needs, and has selected the source to obtain the systems to solve those needs, the last consideration is planning for the future. While the future is uncertain, we can be certain that communications technology will continue to evolve and expand in ways that we never thought possible just a few years ago. Having a communications network in place that allows for growth and flexibility, as well as simple migration to newer technologies, means the Small Business owner can feel confident that they can adapt to the new challenges that lay ahead of them.

The Benefits of Linksys Connected Office:

Linksys Connected Office is the only portfolio that can provide products and systems for a specific problem, such as Network Security, or a complete solution for all of the Data, Voice, Wireless, Security, Mobility, Video and Storage needs of a small business.

The benefits of the Connected Office include:

- **A Complete Portfolio** of products and solutions designed specifically for small business available from resellers and solution providers around the globe.
- **Flexible Deployment Models.** Products that can be installed by small businesses themselves or by leveraging the expertise of a VAR or the network and services of a Solution Provider, giving small business owners the ability to choose the right communications solution and expertise that best fits their needs and their budget.
- **Cost Effectiveness.** Connected Office products are competitively priced, many with integrated performance, security and management features that rival much more expensive systems. Designed specifically for Small Business, the Linksys Connected Office portfolio recognizes that products must not only be cost effective, but also be flexible enough that new growth or changing requirements of the business don't require a complete replacement of the previous system.
- **Investment Protection** — New Business Series infrastructure products are capable of participating in a stand alone deployment or a Linksys One system. This provides a clear TCO as it enables companies to retain their working capital and benefit from different deployment models and technology innovation. Here are just a few examples. Linksys Business Series Switches can be added to existing network infrastructures to provide a cost-effective way to expand or extend a business network. High-speed, Wireless-N products can be added to business networks to provide enhanced productivity for mobile workers who need persistent access to the corporate Intranet, e-mail, printers and the Internet. Many Linksys Connected Office products are also eligible to be exchanged for Cisco enterprise-level through the industry unique Linksys to Cisco Trade-Up Program offering an additional level of investment protection.
- **Better Manageability** — Multiple infrastructure management strategies exist, including the use of hosted or managed infrastructure services, or a total in-house managed solution.

- **Security.** One of the biggest concerns companies have as they conduct business over the Internet is security. To address these concerns, the Connected Office integrates the use of secure technologies and practices in every part of the network to ensure that only appropriate users have access to specific systems and data, that data can not be compromised by malicious persons, and that the systems and data remain available whenever they are needed. Embedded security capabilities such as firewalls, intrusion prevention and detection and VPN tunneling make small business networks more secure and safe.
- **Reliability.** Designed with reliability and interoperability in mind; helping to ensure business continuity. Linksys One, businesses can easily move from one location to another knowing that the network configuration is automatically backed up.
- **Availability.** Mechanisms for improving availability include incorporating physical redundancy into the Connected Office network architecture, and integrating protocols into products and solutions than provide for rapid convergence in the event of a device or link failure. In addition, many Connected Office products have options for redundant power systems (e.g. Linksys Business Series Stackable Switches or Network Storage Systems).
- **Performance** Multiple tools, collectively referred to as tools for the provision of Quality of Service (QoS), are available to ensure that performance guarantees can be delivered. Bandwidth can be optimized automatically or manually with QoS settings, so that applications such as Voice and Video over IP are prioritized over less time-sensitive data traffic.
- **Mobility.** Workers are able to connect back to the corporate network while on the move or while visiting client or partner premises, and can enjoy the flexibility associated with an extended office environment via teleworker solutions. Mobility solutions include the provision of a wireless network infrastructure within the business, and Internet VPN services to workers away from the office. Secure communication through multi-site VPNs, remote access and teleworker solutions increases business agility and resilience.

Planning for the Future

Once a small business has identified its business technology needs and has selected the source to obtain the appropriate products and solutions, the last consideration is planning for the future. Business technologies will continue to evolve, converge and expand in ways never thought possible. Having a solution in place that allows for growth and flexibility, as well as simple migration to newer technologies, means the small business owner can feel confident that they can adapt to the new challenges that lay ahead of them.

While all business owners face the uncertainty of the future, they also face the challenge that the next opportunity could significantly change their business or the entire business landscape around them. All small businesses have a desire to succeed and grow. If the number of employees doubles or triples rapidly, if new locations need to be added, or new applications are needed to dramatically improve efficiency, will there be a reliable source to turn to?

Linksys Connected Office not only provides products and solutions that enable companies to change and grow cost effectively, but also integrates “future-proofing” if the small business owner decides that the business would be better served by allowing it to be managed and monitored remotely. Each component of the Connected Office has been designed with the business requirements for Reliability, Availability, Mobility, Performance, Security and Management in mind.

Choosing the Right Partner Relationship

Initially, small business owners may choose to build their communications network by themselves. While this can reduce initial costs, it may not provide the complete set of functionality needed to solve their most critical communications challenges. By working directly with a Linksys Authorized Reseller/VAR or Solution Provider, a business owner can determine what products and solutions best fit their needs today and in the future.

Conclusion

For the millions of small business owners that are faced with the challenge of providing communications to their employees, partners, and customers, the Connected Office provides a complete portfolio of products and systems. Designed specifically for Small Business, and available through a network of Authorized VAR/Resellers and Solution Providers, the Linksys Connected Office delivers the technology, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness needed to allow businesses to succeed and grow.