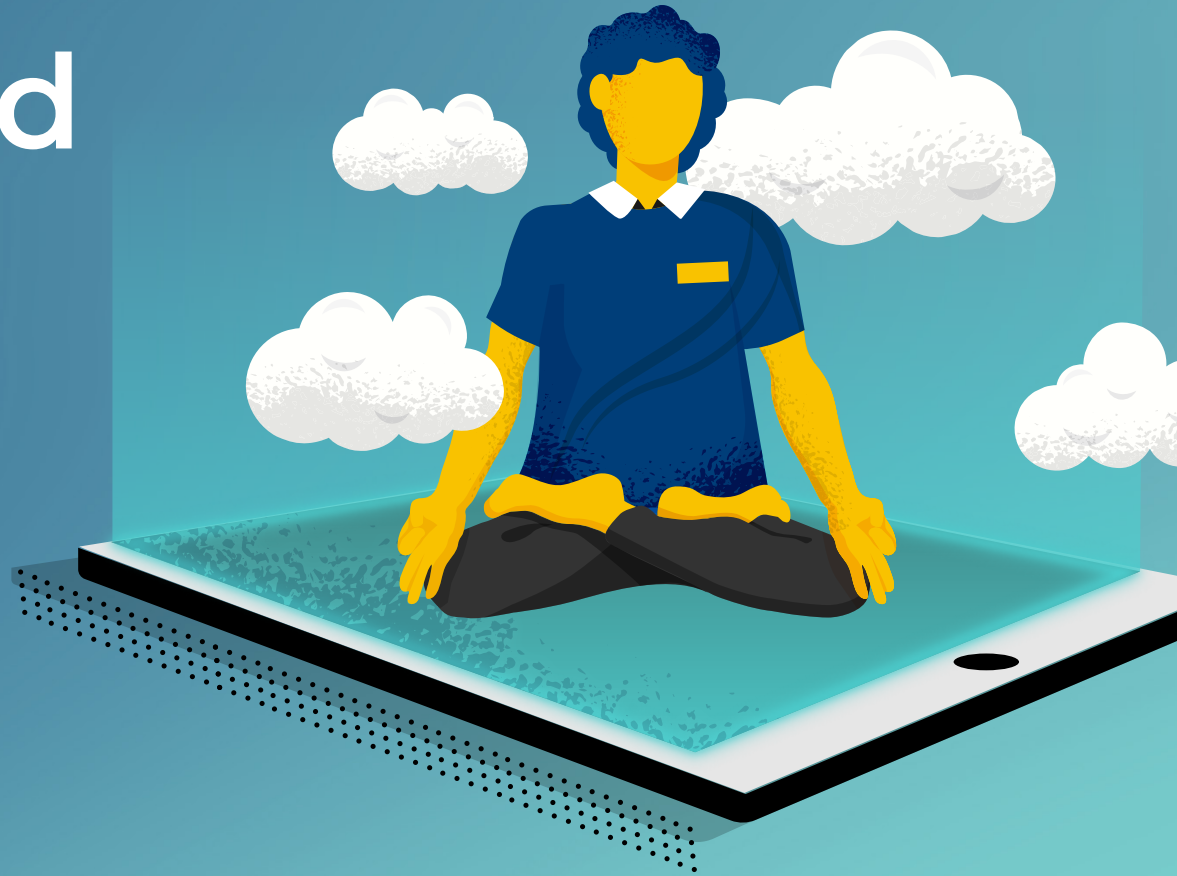


How Technology Can Create Peace of Mind for Small Businesses

Small business owners are busy, working hard to grow their business. Technology should be a benefit, not a risk.

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Introduction



Small business owners are busy, working hard to grow their business while dealing with the day-to-day tasks that come with running a business. On any given day, a small business owner is the sales department, HR department, accounting department, IT department and more, all at the same time.

Technology, therefore, should be a benefit, not a pain point. That includes the network, connectivity tools and security solutions that business owners rely on to run their systems and apps. They need a technology infrastructure that ensures things “just work.”

Downtime is not an option. Every hour of downtime can have dramatic effects on the bottom line, and long stretches can even force a business to close for good. Reliability is critical—not just for the business, but for its customers as well.

Customers expect their needs to be met quickly and their sensitive information to remain safe. Small business owners with a connectivity infrastructure they can trust enjoy peace of mind knowing their systems are working and their customers are happy.

The Need for Speed in Small Business

Today's connected environment demands that small businesses be responsive immediately. But slow Internet can hamper even the most productive employees and be a drag on the business as a whole. And as more and more devices connect to the network, lag can become more than just a nuisance—it can bring the entire company to a grinding halt.



2020, it's estimated that, globally, everyone will have an average of

6.58
CONNECTED
DEVICES,

including smartphones, computers, tablets, smart watches and IoT devices.

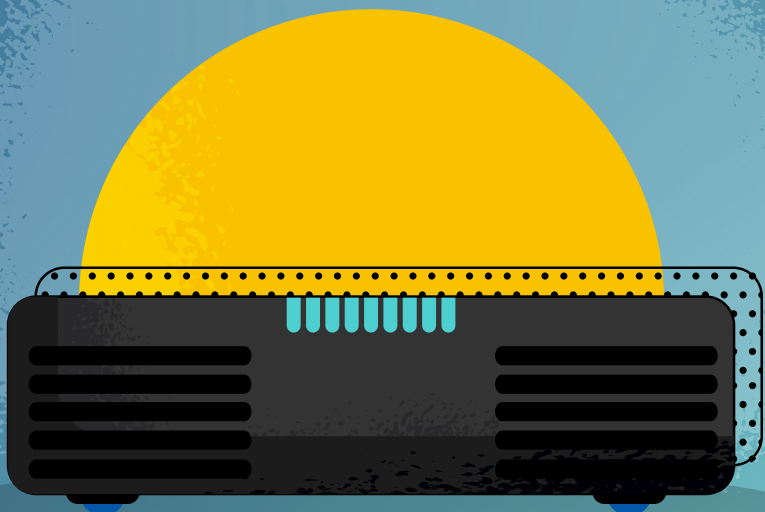
Statista, September 2019

In a 20-person company, there could be more than 100 devices connected to the same network as mission-critical systems like servers, printers, cash registers, telecom systems and smart energy systems. Without fast enough Internet speed, employees will spend time waiting for the network to “catch up” to their work, slowing them down in the process. Small businesses need a network that doesn't slow down, even during peak usage demand.

On top of lost productivity, a laggy network can hurt customer experience. Imagine a customer connecting to a company's guest WiFi, logging on and experiencing extremely slow load times—or, worse yet, a “could not establish a connection” message. Guest WiFi has moved from a bonus amenity to a required part of the guest experience, so guest networks need to work—and work fast. Bandwidth allocation, or the ability to regulate the amount of bandwidth consumed by the private WiFi and guest WiFi networks, can help a small business ensure the WiFi works for everyone.

Having Internet that can handle usage demands future-proofs small businesses. The proliferation of IoT devices, for example, is growing at record pace: [Gartner estimates by 2024, at least 50% of digital business solutions in production will be IoT-enabled](#). As more devices such as smart thermostats, digital whiteboards and even personal digital assistants (think Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant) become ubiquitous in small business environments, a network robust enough to handle the added traffic—and its resulting data—will be critical.

The Importance of Reliability



You can have the fastest Internet available, but if you can't depend on its reliability, speed is inconsequential. Every business depends on its network to enable employees to do their work and service their customers, and every moment of lost connection has a direct impact on the business. In addition to employees not being able to get their work done, if customers can't connect with someone at the business, oftentimes they'll take their business elsewhere.

Small businesses can't have a network that is flaky or unreliable, and they need to know they'll stay connected even when the network does go offline. And, should they lose access to their network due to disaster—natural or otherwise—they need to know their data is safe and available. A backup strategy that helps keep their business up and running even when the network is down can offer a much-needed sense of security, even in times of crisis.

An effective backup strategy should include technologies such as 4G wireless backup, which can keep the network up and running for up to six hours during a power or network outage, and cloud storage so employees and customers can stay connected and productivity isn't affected.

Security: More Than a Necessity

Ransomware-related downtime averaged

\$84,116

"Ransomware Costs Double in Q4 as Ryuk, Sodinokibi Proliferate," threat report, Coveware, January 2020

Length of a ransomware incident averaged

16 Days

"Ransomware Costs Double in Q4 as Ryuk, Sodinokibi Proliferate," threat report, Coveware, January 2020

Small businesses that were targets of cyberattacks

47% IN 2019

"Hiscox Cyber Readiness Report 2019," report, Hiscox Group, April 2019

Disaster doesn't always mean a power outage. Increasingly, disaster can come in the form of malware that crashes a network or even holds it hostage until the business pays a ransom. In Q4 2019, the average [cost of ransomware-related downtime totaled \\$84,116, and the average length of a ransomware incident was 16 days](#). Small businesses are particularly vulnerable: In 2019, [47% of small businesses were targets of a cyberattack](#).

Recognizing the impact that a cyberattack can have on a business in terms of time, money and lost productivity, effective security is a huge element for business owners' peace of mind. It's no longer enough to merely install antivirus software; small businesses need a holistic approach to security that protects company and customer data, as well as business, employee and customer devices. For many small businesses that don't have a full-time IT staff, managed security offerings can provide a level of protection that help keep the entire business secure, both inside and beyond the company's four walls.

An effective security strategy also includes educating employees about proper security hygiene, including effective password strategies, ways to recognize phishing and other social engineering practices and the potential for insider threats.

Finally, comprehensive security should apply to the physical business to protect the employees as well as the assets of the company. IP surveillance video cameras can help the business owner "keep an eye on" the business from anywhere at any time, to ensure the business is safe and to deter any potential criminal activity. And card-enabled door locks or other access controls can help keep employees and assets safe by keeping unwanted guests out.

Conclusion



Having a technology infrastructure that works in ways beyond simple connectivity is becoming more important, as small businesses strive to provide a top-notch customer experience and differentiate themselves from competitors. For many small businesses, peace of mind can come from the speed, reliability and security of a network designed to not just support but also advance the business.

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No matter the type of small business, technology is a vital part of making it successful. For more on finding the right mix of Internet, phone, security, back-up, and other services to maintain peace of mind for small business owners, visit business.comcast.com