Midsized businesses face many challenges as they strive to keep pace with their larger competitors in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex technological environment. Today, companies of all sizes depend on secure, reliable and fast network connections in order to do business. As cloud services, mobility, VoIP and support for remote workers become essential to business operations, business networks will become even more critical to a company’s success.
In order for a midsized business to enhance its productivity, compete effectively in the marketplace and enjoy long-term growth, it must build a robust and cost-effective network. In an effort to minimize costs, many businesses attempt to build and maintain their own networks. However, relying on in-house equipment and expertise to operate a business network can, at times, lead to the following missteps — any one of which can jeopardize the business.

- You could waste valuable capital on investments in equipment and software that your in-house staff lacks the knowledge to operate effectively, upgrade in a timely fashion or maintain over the long term.

- You may overburden the in-house IT staff with routine maintenance and troubleshooting duties, stretching already lean resources even thinner. As a result, key IT staff must spend their time on daily network tasks, preventing them from working on the strategic initiatives your company must implement in order to move forward.

- Ultimately, you risk falling behind in the marketplace as more sophisticated, forward-thinking companies leverage innovative network solutions to gain first-mover advantage.

Is Your Business Network Moving You Forward, or Holding You Back?
5 Keys to Developing a Future-Focused Business Network

How can you avoid falling prey to network risks and help ensure your business is leading the way into the future, rather than lagging behind the competition? In order to build a business network that can power your business both today and tomorrow, adopt these five best practices.

1. Ensure speed and reliability.

Purchasing the equipment necessary for fast, reliable network connections is time consuming and costly while installing and maintaining that equipment can be a complex task. Outsourcing to a third-party provider can offer the robust solution you need without an extensive outlay of money or time. Partner with a fiber-rich, facilities-based network services provider that offers network resiliency, diversity and scalability. This cost-effective approach ensures that your business has the speed and reliability it needs to grow.
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2. Focus on security.
Cyber attacks on businesses are increasing in frequency. In 2014, three out of four organizations reported detecting a security event in the prior 12 months.\(^1\) Given the growing technological sophistication required to maintain cyber security in the face of increasingly ingenious attacks, more than half of all businesses now choose to outsource a portion of their IT security needs. Outsourcing to a network services provider allows your business to tap into the broad and deep security expertise of professionals who make it their business to keep abreast of the latest security risks and appropriate solutions. By enlisting the assistance of these experts, you can feel confident that your business network is secure and your business is protected against risk, while freeing your IT staff to focus on more strategic work.

3. Be prepared to scale.
When opportunity strikes, will your business be ready to take advantage of it — or will an inadequate network slow you down? Rapid growth puts greater demands on business networks, yet scaling a network rapidly requires both capital investment and technological expertise that are often outside the scope of a midsized business’ financial and human resources. Partnering with a network services provider allows you to scale or reconfigure your network with less risk and shorter lead times that will suit your business needs. This enables you to nimbly take advantage of growth opportunities, or to scale back and cut operating costs as needed if business unexpectedly slows down.

\(^1\)PWC, *US Cybercrime: Rising Risks, Reduced Readiness (2014)*
4. Concentrate on your core business.
Continuous network monitoring and 24/7/365 support are essential to keep business operations running smoothly. But they can also be cost-prohibitive for many businesses to handle internally, and divert the IT team’s resources from addressing core business issues. Outsourcing to a network services provider that offers best-in-class customer service and highly automated systems and processes enables your IT team to focus on strategic tasks rather than routine day-to-day network operations. To take network headaches off your IT team’s hands, seek a provider that has a firm commitment to meeting SLAs and offers local service and support resources to ensure rapid response when needed.

5. Weigh economies both of scale and of expertise.
When budgeting for building a future-focused network, it’s important to consider long-term costs in addition to one-time, upfront expenses. Add up the costs of planning and buying equipment, setting up your own network, keeping your IT staff properly trained, and developing the in-house expertise needed to maintain your business network over time. In addition to these ongoing expenses, don’t forget potential costs that you may be exposed to as a result of building and maintaining your own network. These can include the cost of lost productivity from network downtime, expenses related to security breaches, or the cost of the man-hours involved in retrieving or reconstructing lost data. Obtain bids from network service providers that can provide a one-stop solution for setting up, monitoring and operating your business network. Then compare these costs to those of the do-it-yourself approach.
Perhaps the biggest potential cost of building and maintaining your own network is opportunity cost. Will your business miss out on possibilities for growth because your do-it-yourself network cannot keep pace with your business vision?

Reduce this risk by partnering with an experienced third-party provider that has a facilities-based, redundant network; offers best-in-class service and support; and provides economies both of scale and of expertise, creating long-term value for its business customers. By choosing the right network services provider, you will ensure your company has a future-focused network that helps pave the pathway to success.
About Time Warner Cable Business Services

Time Warner Cable Business Services, a division of Time Warner Cable, offers a full complement of business communications tools to small, medium and enterprise-sized companies under its Time Warner Cable Business Class brand. Its Internet, voice, television, network and cloud services are enhanced by award-winning customer service and local support teams. Through its NaviSite subsidiary, Time Warner Cable Business Services also offers scalable managed services, including application services, enterprise hosting, and managed cloud services primarily in the U.S. and U.K. Time Warner Cable Business Services, founded in 1998, serves approximately 625,000 business customers throughout Time Warner Cable’s service areas.

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