Mega-Bandwidth Applications

The Elephant in the Room

We've written about this before (see July 2007). Bandwidth is like water and electric utilities in the sense that it's neither free nor unlimited, and the more data we move across the Internet the more it costs.

Services that promise "unlimited usage" do not in reality have unlimited capacity, they are simply betting that their high-volume users will be offset by a majority of low-volume users. However, as the popularity of very high bandwidth applications like online video and full-length movies increases, several of the large national cable ISPs are now contemplating usage limits.

For example, Time Warner Cable is testing tiered bandwidth caps as a way to fairly balance the needs of heavy users against the limited amount of shared bandwidth that cable can provide. The plan is to offer various service tiers with bandwidth fees for overuse, as well as a bandwidth meter customers can use to help them stay within their allotment. Charter and Comcast are also testing the same thing. (*If this sounds like what OCS has always done, it's because as usual we understood this issue from the start.*)

Netflix has announced they will soon begin delivering movies and other entertainment over customers' high-speed Internet connections. "Consumers crave compelling and immediate content, and the Netflix online streaming movie feature can provide instant gratification." Apple plans to offer major studio films which can be viewed on computers, iPods or iPhones. YouTube video clips have quickly become commonplace, and they (plus iTunes) are already accounting for as much as 50% of some ISPs' overall traffic.

Video companies are beginning to advertise their new services very aggressively, but bandwidth requirements are never mentioned. A full-length movie of DVD quality is typically between 1-2 GB in size, and the most common OCS wireless account (the Basic Plan) allows up to 10GB of usage per month without an excess surcharge. That includes normal web surfing, email, photos, games, software downloads, and so on – all totaling slightly less than 5GB per month for the average OCS subscriber. But that is steadily increasing, and average usage per subscriber has nearly doubled in just the last two years.

So, this trend might currently allow for two or possibly three downloaded movies per month without risking an excess bandwidth surcharge. But at the same time, actual viewing experience will also depend on the speed of your plan type – a steady connection at 1-2 mbps is recommended to avoid stalls or

Online Backup

Underscoring A Critical Concept

This too has been discussed previously (see March 2006) but it's a good time to bring it up again, especially since it relates directly to this issue's article about bandwidth usage.
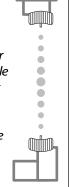
Like businesses in the past, even the average residential Internet user now has a ton of personal information on their computer which they would really hate to lose. Email, homework, correspondence, records, family photos … all of it could be gone in an instant if your hard drive crashes, or your computer gets dropped or is stolen or destroyed in a fire.

Our advice for more than twenty years has been to make a habit of regular backup. Yet most people and even many businesses still learn that lesson the hard way, and even among those who are diligent very few keep their backups in a separate location so that a fire or theft won't render the exercise pointless.

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- **VIRUSES STOPPED BY OCS SYSTEM: 1,287,082**
- **SPAM BLOCKED BY OCS SYSTEM: 106,681,711**

Mega-Bandwidth Applications
Continued from Side One

dropouts, especially during busy hours, so a Basic Plan may not be adequate and a plan type upgrade would add more cost.

The bottom line is that there's no free lunch, and the cost of "instant gratification" may be more than most subscribers really want to pay. When we plug more appliances into our electrical system, we also expect the meter to run faster and the bill to be higher – and it's no different with bandwidth.

Bandwidth usage is what the online video promotions are not mentioning. So before you sign up for one of those services and start choosing your convenient after-dinner movies "on the fly," it might be worth thinking twice about the real cost after including bandwidth. The Netflix DVD-by-mail service is said to be fast and efficient, and it consumes no bandwidth other than the online selection process.

In the carefree fifties there was a prediction that we'd soon receive mail via small personal rockets. That was another time when technology was also exploding and anything seemed possible, but that didn't necessarily mean that all ideas were good or practical.

Stuck in a contract?
Show us your binding paperwork and we may be able to waive up to $100 from your OCS startup costs…

Online Backup
Continued from Side One

It's been clear for quite a while that the Internet could provide a good solution. However bandwidth is once again the problem, especially when mega-pixel digital photos are involved.

Nevertheless, the market is once again forcing the issue with new promotions for online backup services which fail to mention the cost in bandwidth usage. In particular, *Carbonite.com* sounds like a great solution and reviews suggest that it works well enough. However, anyone considering a service like this (*Mozy.com* is another) should be sure to use the OCS bandwidth monitor to keep track of what your costs in excess usage surcharges might be!

That being said, the concept is still a good one if the bandwidth problem can be resolved, and OCS is exploring ways in which we could provide this service more efficiently than others. Two possibilities include (a) making the initial backup in our office to avoid using customers' bandwidth, and (b) scheduling incremental online backups during late-night hours when overall activity is minimal (that's why we don't count usage from midnight to 0600). Let us know at customerservice@ocsnet.net if you'd be interested in a service like this.

Fan Mail
"Thank you to all OCS staff for your patience and care, you did a wonderful job helping me and my wife over the phone. OCS has always been great when we need help." -RK

Help us celebrate! *OCS turned 25 in February 2007, the company was started in a home office in 1982. We've had our 25-year logo printed on a selection of glassware as gifts for our customers, please stop by the office and choose yours! We have mugs in three colors, tall mixing (pint) glasses, and etched wine glasses. Get them while they last, limit two per customer!*

I Didn't Know That!

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| Plan Name | Average Speeds | | | B-M-W[1] | One-Time Fees | | | Monthly Service |
	Min	Typ	Max		Service Activation	Install/ Configure	Equipment Deposit	
1 Bandwidth-Mailboxes-Webspace (see notes)								
DIALUP	26K	40K	53K	1-5-5	25.00	-	-	24.95
Accelerator	Typically 2-5X faster			-	-	-	-	+5.00
WIRELESS | STANDARD 2.4 GHz								
24 Basic	125K	500K	750K	10-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	49.95[2,3]
24 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	79.95[2,3]
24 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95[2,3]
WIRELESS | SPECIAL CASES 900 MHz (where available)								
900 Basic	125K	375K	750K	5-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	59.95[4,5]
WIRELESS | MISSION CRITICAL 5.8 GHz (where available)								
58 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	99.95
58 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95
58 Professional	500K	2M	3M	25-25-25	25.00	100.00	100.00	159.95
58 Corporate	750K	3M	4M	30-30-30	25.00	100.00	100.00	199.95
58 Enterprise	1M	4M	5M	40-40-40	25.00	100.00	100.00	249.95

All plans include automated central email virus scanning, email spam filtering, and website parental controls. Some plan types permit webspace for personal use only. Wireless installation and deposit package may be paid in installments upon request. All speeds are symmetrical (same for upload and download) within the OACYS network only. All plans terminate at OACYS Porterville headquarters and transport to the Internet via dual T3s over dedicated OC12 fiber optic circuit. All plans subject to change without notice. Pricing and terms are current at the date of this newsletter and supersede previous versions. For footnotes 2,3,4,5 surcharges may apply. Please check with our office for additional details.