

Company: Boodle Hatfield

Industry: Law

“At the end of 2007 we were pushing the limits of our network and Internet connection, and there was no prospect of getting our new wired link in time. Urban Wimax was a neat answer to the challenge.”

Thereza Snyman, IT manager, Boodle Hatfield

The challenge: Improving Internet connectivity despite the constraints of wired services.

Law firm Boodle Hatfield has an enviable record for customer retention. It has served some clients since it was founded nearly 300 years ago. It is now a thriving modern law firm with a full spectrum of commercial and private clients, and particular strengths in property and private client law.

While building on its heritage and traditions, the Firm has embraced working in digital form, as the legal sector migrates into using an increasing amount of electronic communication and resource. “Our Internet usage is increasing exponentially and much of that growth is in email attachments” says IT manager Thereza Snyman. In Boodle Hatfield’s case, these include huge TIFF and PDF images of plans and drawings relating to its property work.

The company has around 180 staff in its head office in New Bond Street, London, and another 30 in Oxford. It currently has a 2Mbps BT leased circuit between the two offices, and another 2Mbps of Internet connectivity in London - but this became inadequate.

The company decided to replace those links with a LAN extension service and fibre internet link based on wired connections from NTL. “This appealed because on a LAN extension, all the Oxford systems would be a logical part of the London office’s local area network, and both would share the same connection to the outside world says Snyman.



Unfortunately, the new wired links require civil engineering work, and it has been delayed for months, by the need for site surveys and permissions. The Firm streams its data backups offsite, but with increasing data volumes these were taking an increasingly large bite of the available bandwidth – adding to the need for secure, redundant and reliable incremental bandwidth. “By the end of 2007, we were pushed against the limits,” says Snyman. “There was no prospect of getting our NTL LAN extension service and internet connection in soon enough.”

Implementing Urban Wimax

Urban Wimax uses a ‘standards-based’ Wide Area Network technology that provides high-throughput broadband connections over long distances. It is an intelligent technology that supports many different types of application, from videoconferencing through remote access to web surfing, all at high level of service.

“I had been looking at wireless technology two years ago, but I wouldn’t go for it then, because I didn’t believe it was adequately mature, and I had concerns about security,” says Snyman. “In 2007 we happened on Urban Wimax and looked at wireless again.”

The Urban Wimax service was quick to install. Instead of civil engineering work, it only needed an antenna for the London office, which the building’s owners were happy to have installed on the roof. “The landlords were amenable,” says Snyman.

Within no time at all, Boodle Hatfield had access to a much-needed additional 4Mbps of bandwidth.

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This solved some of the immediate problems and became a core part of Boodle Hatfield's long-term infrastructure. Backups now happen overnight, so they no longer compete with daytime internet usage.

The Urban Wimax service has been reliable. "We've never had to call on support because Urban Wimax is proactive," says Snyman. "They even detected a latency problem we weren't aware of, did tests and obtained approval to reposition the antenna to avoid interference. That's the kind of service we appreciate."

The NTL link is going ahead. Boodle Hatfield will have 10Mbps, delivered over a circuit that can be expanded to 100Mbps: "We don't know where technology is going, but my guess is that demand for Internet access is going to increase substantially."

But no matter how fast its wired connection, the company will continue to rely on its Urban Wimax link. Wired services will always be slow to set up, and vulnerable. "A JCB could cut the cable and we'd be lost," says Snyman. For Boodle Hatfield, the Urban Wimax service has become a vital way to overcome the limitations of wired links, and deliver the flexibility and expandability the company needs.

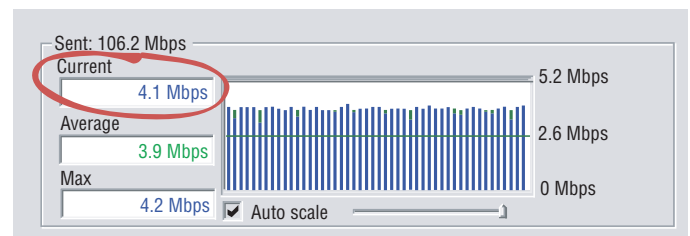
Future plans

Load balancing between different service providers is the next step for Boodle Hatfield. The firm's Check Point firewall can be set up to combine the Urban Wimax service with whichever other Internet service it has, to make one more reliable link, distributing traffic between the two and failing over as necessary.

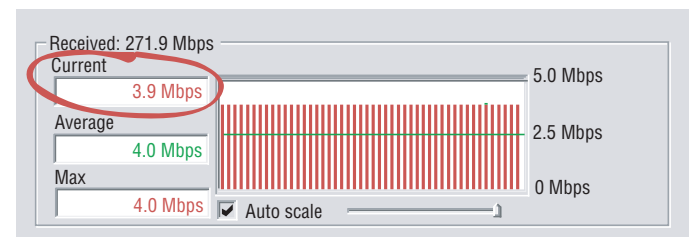
The Urban Wimax service can provide additional bandwidth needed to smooth further delays in the eventual handover to the NTL service. "We could go up to 10Mbps on the Urban Wimax link for a period, if we need to," says Snyman. Beyond that, she may partition the Urban Wimax service, to provide better quality service for some applications that need it.



Urban Wimax Independent Test Results



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Summary:

Key Benefits:

- The Urban Wimax service can be deployed swiftly without detailed planning permission or civil engineering works, while wired links can take months to provision
- Proactive support gives continuous service
- A flexible Urban Wimax link can overcome problems of wired links
- Load balancing combines the strengths of both wired and wireless

Further information regarding Boodle Hatfield can be obtained by visiting www.boodlehatfield.com

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