

What's in Contention?

Gone are the days when you could choose your business internet package simply by calculating how much bandwidth you needed. As more corporate infrastructure is squeezed down your existing internet connection, there are other factors you must take into account if you want to keep your data flowing seamlessly: your contention ratio, for example.

Fluiddata's Sales Director, James Hall explains why, when it comes to businesses, a 1:1 contention ratio is the only option:

"If you have a 2Mb/s line with a 20:1 contention ratio you are sharing your bandwidth with up to 20 other users, so at peak traffic times your actual bandwidth is only guaranteed to be 0.1Mb/s.

We have noticed that many suppliers are offering low cost, high speed business connections without mentioning the contention ratio. But, if you can't guarantee the contention ratio then you can't guarantee the service and businesses need that assurance. This is why Fluiddata now provides a guaranteed 1:1 contention ratio on all lines, at all times - effectively making it a leased line - and still at highly competitive pricing."

Contention issues are not the only concern. More businesses are hosting websites in-house, making use of Virtual Private Network (VPN) and transferring to Voice-over IP (VoIP) telephone systems; the strain on the upward flow of data is ever-increasing. With ADSL, data does not flow at the same speed in both directions: typically, a line with 2Mb/s downstream will only have 250Kb/s upstream. This effectively renders the line useful for only a handful of VPN users, and that is assuming you have a 1:1 contention ratio! By contrast, with SDSL the up and down speed is the same, so a 2Mb/s SDSL line could take more than 40 VPN users.

Unfortunately, these factors are not always transparent in the sales process, which is cause for concern at Fluiddata:

"Businesses come to us and tell us that they already have a 4Mb/s ADSL line and can't figure out why remote users dialling in are experiencing such slow access. When we point out that they are sharing the 4Mb/s with up to 20 other users and they only have a 250Kb/s upload bandwidth, they realise that the line they installed to last a few years is effectively already insufficient."

Fluiddata appear to be doing their bit. They now supply xDSL lines with a 1:1 contention ratio as standard, convinced that SDSL is the only solution for a dependable business connection.

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