Smart ways to optimize your growing business network

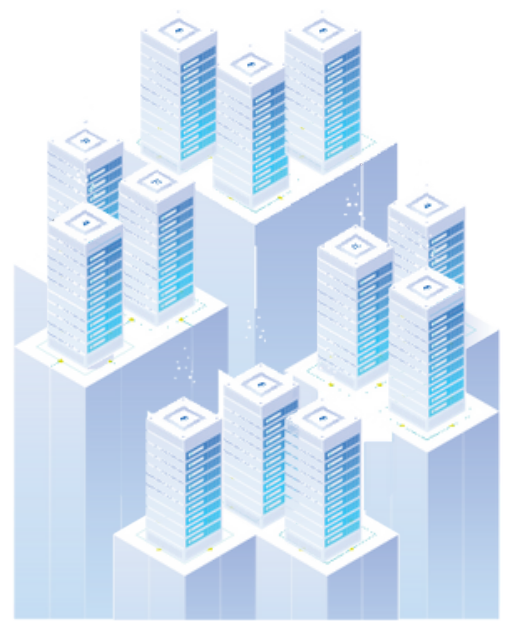Ensure your internet connection is fast, secure, and scalable enough for success

What to expect when building, moving, or optimizing your small-business network

Ensure your internet connection is fast, secure, and scalable enough for success

Table of Contents

Great networks make for great business

A 20-person business that relies heavily on email, web browsing, and VoIP calls usually needs an internet connection that's at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps). Anything less than that is like asking your employees to work with one of their hands tied behind their backs.

Internet service providers (ISPs) that offer these business-ready speeds aren't hard to find, but it is hard to ensure that nothing eats away at your precious connection to customers, partners, and company tools. The best internet package in town doesn't mean squat if the person working at the front desk is downloading 4k video all day.

> *Slow internet is just as costly as no internet.*

Network slowdowns stemming from faulty hardware, poor IT management, and users enjoying content unrelated to work are just a few examples of issues that often go undetected — even when you have a rockstar technician in house.

Every day is a gamble if a lone staffer is responsible for maintaining your network and fixing run-of-the-mill computer problems. Failing to address network issues results in longer customer response times, lower employee morale, and fewer sales.

How can I prevent these issues?

The simple answer is that you should delegate network maintenance to trained and certified professionals. It's usually a full-time job to ensure an office internet connection is reliable, convenient, and secure, so you either need an additional technician or third-party support.

Stop relying on reactive support and start investing in help that optimizes your network to fit your business needs

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Prepping your network for growth

Setting up a small- to medium-sized business (SMB) computer network is stressful. The cabling process alone is tedious enough, with hurdles ranging from safety regulations to choosing between the cheapest and fastest cables, not to mention dealing with building restrictions when it comes to cabling through the wall. All that before you even begin to think about wireless connections!

Throughout the setup process, there will be decisions that seem too technical or tedious for your consideration, but they're crucial when defining your timeline, budget, and growth plan. Everything is simpler when you have access to experts that can translate IT questions into plain

> *" A clear vision of the finished project makes setting up a new network or moving an existing one to another location far less stressful. "*

Noting down your basic network needs before negotiating a deal with a support vendor or provider is critical. Here are some questions to kick-start the brainstorming process:

1. What is the total square footage of your office?

2. Does your office have hard or drop ceilings?

3. How many devices will need to connect to the internet on a daily basis via wired connections?

4. How many devices will need to connect to the internet on a daily basis via wireless connections?

5. Approximately how many additional wired and wireless devices will you have one year from now?

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Prepping your network for growth

6. Will your phone systems rely on analog or internet connections?

7. How many devices will be making and receiving video calls?

8. How quickly do you need the project finished?

9. Will it be possible for technicians to work on network setup during weekday business hours?

Trained professionals should be able to set up your network in 1–2 days if all your hardware is ready and there aren't any major hiccups. Of course, nothing is certain. SMBs should back up all their data before a network upgrade and consider setting up cloud solutions to allow remote work in case of unexpected delays.

Preparing your network for the future will save your business thousands of dollars in maintenance and upgrades

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Inexpensive solutions to everyday network issues

Unplugging your router and plugging it back in doesn't work as well in the office as it does at home. SMB networks are complicated and every new employee or device creates an opportunity to slow down or even *bring down* your internet connection. If your team includes 20 people working at $25/hour, one measly hour of network downtime is $500 in lost productivity — not including missed sales opportunities during that time.

Solution #1: Analyze internet usage

Maintaining a healthy network, like maintaining a healthy body, is all about limiting bad habits and getting regular checkups. In terms of limiting bad habits, consider that one survey on office bandwidth found that 57% of respondents revealed that employees were downloading movies and games using their employer's internet.

A basic web filter could solve these issues but we'll do you one better: Bandwidth optimization tools let you create digital "fast lanes" for your most important apps and tools.

> " *Should YouTube videos ever take priority over an internet-based conference call? Of course not!* "

Optimization tools enable whoever is managing your network to create rules that favor one app (or several) over others when doling out shares of the office internet.

Inexpensive solutions to everyday network issues

Solution #2: Examine network hardware

Computer hardware doesn't always blow up in a puff of smoke. Sometimes it slowly and subtly becomes less efficient without any fanfare. We've seen clients with routers and switches that *technically* worked, but only barely.

At least once per quarter, you should compare your internet service package to the speeds you're actually experiencing. If there's a significant discrepancy, ask a technician to trace the root of the problem. There's a good chance that you can increase your internet speeds simply by replacing an overused device or updating the software it runs on.

Solution #3: Monitor downtime

One shockingly simple problem is just knowing whether or not the network is working. The office internet might go down in one room but not another, employees might not speak up about an outage, or an intermittent connection might make the issue difficult to pinpoint. Today, services to monitor your internet at the source work 24x7 and are fairly inexpensive.

The sooner you know about downtime, the faster you can resolve it. In fact, network support providers often include monitoring services in their plans to measure downtime and guarantee it never exceeds a predetermined amount.

Above all else, keep your network secure. Few things disrupt SMB growth like a cyberattack

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Prioritizing data security on a budget

A study by the University of Maryland revealed that a typical computer is attacked approximately every 39 seconds, or 2,244 times per day. The advent of automated and preprogrammed tools have enabled hackers to broaden their range of targets without increasing the necessary legwork.

The good news is that despite the constant onslaught of cyberattacks, most of them are unsophisticated. A hardware firewall, anti-malware software installed on every computer, and employee training will thwart most digital threats against SMBs.

> " *Regardless of whether you're operating out of your garage or a skyscraper, cybersecurity is key to maintaining business growth.* "

But if only one out of 50,000 attacks is advanced enough to beat basic cybersecurity measures, you'd still be facing more than one breach per month. That's when having a network security provider really pays off.

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Prioritizing data security on a budget

In-house vs. third-party security

The biggest difference between a full-time technician and a managed services provider (MSP) is usually flexibility. You may feel like you'll get the most out of an in-house employee since you see them in the office every day, but there's more to it than that.

How much vacation and sick time does your technician get? Do they respond to late-night network issues? By choosing a third-party cybersecurity provider, you define what's most important. You can pick one that specializes in your industry, offers compliance services, or guarantees certain response times.

Another option is to let your in-house technician offload work to third-party specialists when there are capacity issues. This lets you navigate that awkward time when you can't justify hiring an additional full-time position but need more help. What matters most is that your network protects company resources rather than exposing them.

Intelligent Technical Solutions streamlines network security so your office is productive and safe

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An all-in-one solution for all your networking needs

If you want a reliable, convenient, and secure office network, working with a third-party service provider is the best option. That arrangement means you pay for a product backed by uptime guarantees and unwavering support availability. Compare that to the in-house option, which is plagued by individuals who can't be replaced when they're sick and can't specialize in every necessary skill set.

Managed IT services from Intelligent Technical Solutions include everything from setting up a new network to keeping your employees safe from cyberattacks. We'll even help you move to a bigger office when you reach that stage of your growth journey.

You pay a flat monthly fee for abundant access to a variety of specialists who provide support, advice, and peace of mind. Give us a call today to learn more about why we do what we do, and how we do it.

Want to see our vision for your budget-friendly network upgrade? Schedule a free consultation today!

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**Phone: : 866-232-3013 -
Email: info@itsasap.com
www.itsasap.com**