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## Wide Area Networks Aid Homework

**I**ncreasingly we are finding home workers turning to wide area networks as a solution to the challenge of the daily commute. When the cost of travelling, parking and the time sat in traffic jams is taken into account the initial set up costs of a wide area network are soon recovered.

The recent clarification of the ban on using the telephone whilst driving has also caused companies to consider the productivity of "road warriors" as it is no longer acceptable to expect staff to use the phone whilst driving.

Office rental costs have increased and the cost of providing a permanent desk for each member of staff in city centre offices is being reviewed by many organisations.

"But we lose control if we let our staff work from home" is a common statement from managers. Plum however have many technical solutions to enable managers and staff to retain control of quality, time and cost.

It is possible to record all telephone calls made by a home worker, for training purposes or for evidence to back up an order in case of a query. For workers in the health and insurance industries this recording may be required by underwriters as indemnity on a policy.

Technology allows the manager to view in real time details of home workers (or agents) who are on the phone and the number of the party they are taking to plus the duration of the call. Historical data available to the manager includes details of total calls made, duration, answer times, ring times, total talk time, and whether calls were to customers or private.



Suzanne demonstrates the Avaya system which can be used by both office and home workers

"Staff may feel isolated working from home" is another common remark, but this can be addressed in several ways. Employees can be given access to an extranet to share information, gossip, chat like the office notice board, they can be allowed to talk socially during work time to colleagues without those calls being recorded and they can be involved with social activities at the office or in their local area.



➤ Isolation is subjective, it may be that an employee working in an office may feel more isolated than if they were working from home in a comfortable environment with the knowledge that friends and family are not far away.

Some people may not like the idea of working from home, they may need daily contact with co-workers or their work may involve face to face meetings with clients. For these total home-working may not be the answer but they may be able to adopt some degree of remote working.



Eddie demonstrates the ease with which the Avaya system can be connected to a cabling system

Sharing data with remote users is a vital part of remote working and this is most commonly done by creating a virtual private network. Depending upon the size of the remote population and the organisation we will recommend several solutions, Most commonly we will suggest a system using broadband or broadband and leased line with security being provided by routers and firewalls. These VPNs can be purchased or rented and they can be supplied as a managed service which means that the client does not need any specialist IT skills.

When setting up a remote network it is important to consider security. Which PC will a home worker use and how will access be restricted to authorised users? If wireless is to be used which measures will be taken to prevent unauthorised access.

Employers have a duty of care to ensure that their employees work in a safe environment and this will apply to home workers so as a minimum a potential home worker should carry out a risk assessment for their home workspace and the employer will still be responsible for ensuring that electrical appliances are tested, monitors are to the relevant standard and at the correct height, lighting and noise levels are suitable.

The employer may also wish to restrict internet access to authorised or filtered web sites and have a system in place for monitoring email communications to prevent the employee from inappropriate content and as a record of any commitments made by the employee which may be binding on the company.

If you are considering introducing home-working or would like more information about how you could benefit from remote working please call Plum Communications on 0161 622 3500.

Some of our other services which may be relevant to home and remote workers:  
fax to email, data on mobile devices, email to mobiles, voicemail, email hosting, web hosting.

Plum Communications have been using Avaya systems for their own home working since 2004.

## Driving and Mobile Phones

The Road Safety Act 2006 came into force 27 February 2007 and introduced new penalties for using a hand-held mobile phone, PDA or other device for sending or receiving data while driving.

You must not drive while holding a mobile phone, supervise a driver whilst holding a mobile phone, cause or permit a driver to drive while holding a mobile phone

You must be in proper control of your vehicle when using a hands free device

If you breach the law the new penalties are:

3 penalty points on your licence

A fixed penalty fine of £60

Cases dealt with by a court can lead to a fine of up to £1,000 or £2,500 for drivers of goods vehicles, buses or coaches

A driver can call 999 or 112 in an emergency

Two-way radios are not covered by this offence

For more info visit [www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk)

To arrange fitting of a handsfree car kit please call Plum on 0161 633 7335

## Avaya Upgrade Program

Avaya have released later firmware versions for the IP Office, new software applications and new look handsets.

Customers have the option to continue using their existing equipment without any change but may wish to consider the benefits of upgrading.

Network Alchemy users should certainly consider an upgrade as the equipment is end of life and support may be difficult to sustain. Fortunately upgrading is not a difficult process, but advice will be needed on how additional applications such as voicemail are hosted as system requirements have changed.

Top reasons for upgrading with Avaya are:

- Increased Functionality**
- New Applications**
- Improved Call Logging**
- Call Recording**
- Voice Over IP**
- Multiple Site Connections**

## Faxes in your Inbox

Fax to email is a service launched earlier this year by Plum. You are allocated a personal fax number and all faxes sent to the number are forwarded to your email account.

This means that you can receive faxes anywhere you collect your email and if you are not on line when a fax is sent the fax is saved for the next time you connect and choose to download.

The advantages are:

- security** - fax is not printed out in an open office but waits in your email box for you to open
- mobility** - faxes can be retrieved from anywhere you have internet/email access
- simplicity** - easy set up just provide us with your email address
- cost saving** - no need for a dedicated fax line or a fax machine to receive incoming faxes

Cost of the service using an 0871 number is just £15 per annum with no set up charge  
Service can be set up within 48 hours.

0207 numbers also available for additional charge.

## Glossary

### WAN

#### Wide Area Network

Connection between two or more sites used for transmission of data and voice traffic.

### Broadband

High bandwidth connection, usually refers to ADSL or SDSL.

### Homeworker

An employee whose normal place of work is the home working from either a shared room or a modified office.

### Remote Worker

An employee who may work from a variety of locations and requires mobility of data and voice.

### Road Warrior

Someone whose main activity seems to be driving to meet clients or business partners. Reliable and safe communications are essential if they are to be productive.

### Managed Service

Common in the data industry, the purchaser rents the service and the management of that service is undertaken by an external company meaning that the purchaser does not need to acquire in-house specialist skills.

### Extranet

An internet site or system developed for a closed user group, typically for an organisation's staff or clients. A method of communicating information in large organisations and particularly suited to home and remote workers.

### Agent

A term often used to describe an employee whose principal duty is to make or receive telephone calls.



# plumoffers

## **BROADBAND**

### **8Mb ADSL Broadband only £19 per month and Office Service only £25 per month**

Plum Customers can now purchase ADSL Broadband for just £19 per month plus VAT. Download speed is up to 8Mb depending upon distance from exchange and line quality.

This type of connections is intended for one or a few PCs. For larger locations we have an Office Service at £25 per month (plus VAT) which allows many PCs to share the same connection.

All Plum ADSL connections are provided with a static IP address, mail sending via SMTP and if required web space and email handling.

Plum also provide Domain registration and hosting and for customers on the move we provide web-mail which allows emails to be collected from the plum website.

Migration to the service is free and for a limited time the company is providing free activation subject to a minimum contract period.

## **MOBILES**

### **Free Audit of your Mobile Costs**

Plum provide a free audit of mobile costs and a recommendation on potential savings. We offer tariffs from all 6 main networks and also our own bespoke tariff for low volume users with line rental from £4 per month

A wide range of handsets are available and full itemised billing is available through the on line service. High volume users will benefit from specially designed bundled tariffs. Full analysis of bills is available as part of the plum service.

Single handsets can also be purchased on line from the Plum website [www.plumcom.co.uk](http://www.plumcom.co.uk).

## **TELEPHONE LINES AND CALLS**

### **Free Audit of your Telephone Charges**

Are you paying too much for your telephone calls? We provide a free audit of your current telecoms spend including calls and line rentals. Savings of 20% to 40% are typical and all charges can be shown on one monthly bill. There is no loss of service and if you need to make changes in the future you will benefit from a single number with dedicated account manager.

## **TELEPHONE SYSTEMS**

### **Audit of your Telephone Equipment**

Plum Communications is offering businesses a free review of their telephone systems including analysis of current equipment, service costs and future requirements. These highly popular reviews have helped other businesses save several thousand pounds per annum and have provided advice on how to invest effectively in new technology.

For further information about any of the articles in this newsletter or to request additional paper copies please contact:

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