Redundant Internet Connection Provides Productivity Assurance

Florida-based Internet provider Sling Broadband encourages business owners to consider how dependent they are on Internet access for their daily operations, and how vulnerable they may be to service disruptions. Imagine the consequences for a popular retailer—especially an ecommerce store—losing its Internet connection on a peak shopping day such as Black Friday or Cyber Monday, when millions of shoppers start their post-Thanksgiving holiday gift buying. The effect on the bottom line could be devastating. Even on a normal business day, an outage of a business's ISP service can result in a significant loss of productivity and lost sales.

Until the beginning of this century, most small to mid-sized companies did not think about needing a redundant Internet connection. At best, they plugged in a UPS device to keep their systems running during an electrical power outage, made backup copies of their data and thought they were safe. Then came the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, where one of the country's largest telecommunications switching centers was located. The subsequent loss of connectivity for all of those customers was a wake-up call. More recently, natural disasters such as hurricanes and tsunamis have wreaked havoc with business Internet connections elsewhere.

While terrorist attacks or natural disasters are rare, Internet network failures are not. Connections can also be lost due to hardware failure, human error or sabotage from hackers. Wide Area Network (WAN) redundancy is essential for organizations which require uninterrupted Internet access for using web-based applications, operating an ecommerce site or maintaining connections with branch locations.

There are a number of solutions to creating redundant Internet access, depending upon a company's network configuration and budget. One option known as Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) is used primarily by large corporations with experienced IT staff because it is complex to install, and it is not available to companies using DSL or cable for Internet service. Another option termed "router clustering" involves using multiple data lines from more than one ISP—not cost effective for most businesses.

The simplest and least expensive option for small and medium-sized businesses is a redundant Internet connection such as the Productivity Assurance service provided by Sling Broadband to its south Florida customers. Sling Broadband installs and configures a remotely-managed router to which the company's main Internet circuit and a "failover" circuit are connected.

This dual ISP configuration provides Internet redundancy through this second circuit which remains inactive unless the main circuit experiences an outage; then, it automatically activates to provide uninterrupted service. And, this redundant circuit can be configured to use a different transmission method than the primary line, providing an additional layer of security. For example, a customer whose primary service travels over a T1 fiber optic line can have a failover circuit that transmits via multiple fixed wireless antennas.

With redundant Internet access such as Sling Broadband's Productivity Assurance, there is no down time at all. For a daily cost of less than a morning cup of coffee, business owners can enjoy a feeling of security and have confidence in their data management system, knowing they will always be able to access their network and that their business operations will continue without interruption.