

NETGEAR[®]

NETGEAR UK Ltd.
Reflex, Cain Road, Bracknell,
Berkshire RG121HL
Tel: +44 (0) 1344 458200
www.netgear.co.uk

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How choosing the
right Wi-Fi makes
your business more
efficient (and even
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While they are often just installed and forgotten, wireless networks have a tangible impact on our daily working lives. Making sure that staff and customers have frustration-free online access is important to the smooth-running of most small businesses these days. It can even help ensure that customers keep coming back and spending more.

Conversely, bad Wi-Fi wastes time and causes frustration (at some point, most of us have experienced emails that won't send, Point-of-Sale connection failures, frozen web pages and apps) and even send customers heading elsewhere. Plus, inefficient wireless connectivity may mean that a small business is not getting the broadband speeds for which it is paying.



INCREASE
REVENUE

Myth-busting

So, how does a business make sure its Wi-Fi system is up to the job? Let's start with busting a couple of wireless network myths. First, the Wi-Fi may not be the culprit - or only culprit - causing patchy or slow wireless connectivity. The external connection from the Internet Service Provider (ISP) may be the problem, so the first task is to carry out a wireline test. Second, look at the environment in which the Wi-Fi system is operating. Ceilings, insulation, proximity to devices that can cause interference (such as cordless phones and microwaves) can all interfere with the wireless signal.

Third, if there is a Wi-Fi system already in place, and if it was supplied by the ISP, there's a fair chance that it is not fit for purpose. Many ISPs provide basic routers that aren't ideally suited to the demands of many small businesses, particularly service industries where there's a need to provide Wi-Fi to customers as well as staff. And if a Wi-Fi system is also more than a couple of years old, it is very likely to also have outdated hardware and software and so it could be time to start afresh.



WHICH WI-FI?



Choosing the right Wi-Fi

These days, there are several different types of Wi-Fi system and it can be confusing, even for someone quite tech-savvy. Bear in mind a few simple things and it does not have to be a daunting task. This may sound obvious but start by defining exactly what is needed: the number of users or devices to support, the surface area to be covered and what bandwidth speeds are desirable (some activities are more bandwidth-hungry than others, for instance video-streaming).

Next, given that most small or even medium-sized businesses do not have lots of spare time or resources to spend setting up a Wi-Fi network, look for a system that is easy to install, without any training, fiddly set-up or technical expertise. Depending on the nature of the business, it may also be important that the system can be easily extended in the future to support more people and a wider coverage area.

Customer service

If customers or guests need Wi-Fi access, it is a good idea to choose a system that offers the ability to segment the wireless connection into more than one Wi-Fi network (rather than customers having access to the same network the business is using). Again, ease-of-use is important here.

If the system is going to be highly visible - such as in a bar or salon - then visual appearance can be important too (who wants to look at an ugly grey box all day?). Flexibility over where it can be mounted makes a difference, especially in confined spaces. If devices like PoS, digital billboards or printers need to be connected, the Wi-Fi unit needs to offer wired Ethernet ports too. Finally, make sure that the system is offering a true upgrade in terms of speed and really does deliver the bandwidth the business needs.



Clever tech

Mesh networks are another useful innovation. These use multiple Wi-Fi access points - often referred to as satellites - that can be daisy-chained together to create a single network, all controlled from one original router. When the Wi-Fi network needs to be extended, just add another satellite. Furthermore, the performance of the Wi-Fi system remains consistent across all routers and satellites (instead of tailing-off at the edge of the network's coverage, a common problem with many traditional Wi-Fi systems).

However, not all mesh networks are created equal, because once again, many standard mesh networks are based on sharing the Wi-Fi connection with the backhaul and that impacts speed and performance, so make sure to choose a tri-band mesh network.

Instead, take a look at the latest generation of tri-band Wi-Fi systems,, which in effect optimise the bandwidth available. Single or dual-band share the bandwidth between users and the Wi-Fi system's internal communications (called the backhaul), while tri-band has a dedicated backhaul link, so there is not trade-off and instead, the business gets the maximum amount of bandwidth for which it is paying.

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Orbi Pro

Designed with small and medium sized businesses in mind, especially those that also need to offer customer Wi-Fi, the Orbi Pro ticks all the boxes. Essentially 'DIY Wi-Fi in a box', it can be installed and set up in just minutes, without any changes to existing equipment. Orbi Pro offers coverage from 5,000 up to 10,000 square feet and it is up to 100 times faster than other mesh networks, providing 223Mbps compared to just 71 Mbps from some other solutions.

Another benefit is that Orbi Pro allows businesses to set up three distinct wireless Internet networks (SSIDs), which are completely separate and secure. Typical configurations could be: one for the admin office, one for customers or guest users, and one for personal use.

Also, if more users need to be supported or the coverage area increased, satellites can be quickly and easily installed. Up to three satellites can be installed, each one able to cover 2,500 square feet, with a choice of both wall and ceiling mounting. While it is 'fit and forget', Orbi Pro has a simple app that helps a business check the status of the Wi-Fi system, make changes, as well as access to useful support information.

Customer experience

Above all, Orbi Pro helps businesses turn Wi-Fi into a tangible asset that improves the experience of guests or customers, ensuring that they receive impressive and consistent wireless connectivity every time, which in turn encourages loyalty, return visits, longer stays and more expenditure.

Wi-Fi technology has evolved a great deal and so any business that has not recently reviewed wireless options could be missing out on a lot: speed, reliability, flexibility and ease-of-use; getting the best connectivity for which they are paying; and turning Wi-Fi into something that truly adds to the customer experience.

