

Bandwidth prices rises, coupled with greater internet usage, drive increased sales of Caching devices for schools

Since 2003 Becta, the Government agency promoting the use of information and communications technology, have recommended the use of Caching devices to increase internet performance for schools, deliver multiple preloaded eLearning packages and provide web content security filtering. Equinet, the acknowledged market leader in this sector, report that 2008 saw an increase in the rate of renewal of older caching devices, driven by the need by schools to get ever more efficient usage from their current investments due to spiraling bandwidth costs.

In the consumer home market, where speed of connection and pricing are also key issues, recent admissions from Ofcom have finally officially confirmed that claims by ISPs of providing so called 'high speed connectivity' are actually somewhat exaggerated! Having said that, what is not being highlighted is that competition has actually forced prices down for home users and certainly to date, prices are quite stable. The problems in education are the reverse - their usually non-ADSL broadband connectivity actually delivers near 'what it says on the tin' most of the time – but what is of concern are rising prices.

Equinet Managing Director, Keith Baker comments “2008 was a bumper year for us with many of the original CachePilot users and large numbers of those using competitive products, choosing to upgrade to the more powerful Equinet CachePilot Plus model to cope with their schools' growing networks and ever greater use of internet connectivity. At a time when bandwidth costs are continuing to rise for education users, the benefits of obtaining 30% to 40% better bandwidth utilisation does make excellent sense and patently CachePilot is valued by many”.

Baker explains that the bandwidth available to schools was a relatively low 2 megabits/second when Equinet first developed CachePilot back in 2003. Since then schools have had much more bandwidth available to them – circuits that really deliver 8 to 10, or even 100 megabits/second in both directions and they have enjoyed comparatively reasonable charges. Now, however, further increases in the cost of bandwidth plus the burgeoning number of computers and a hugely increased reliance on internet-based data - means that schools and Local Authorities need to review the systems in place. They could well find that a new generation cache is necessary.

“Behind the scenes BT is still creating its C21 infrastructure network, with everything in the centre going digital,” Baker comments. “Whilst this will mean big efficiency savings for BT, unfortunately there are no signs these will be passed on and what is happening in the home market will only make it worse for education users. We have already encountered service providers - who are reliant on BT Wholesale for a portion of their own networks - who have had to pass on increased costs as a result.”

As part of the company’s 2009 activities, Equinet has chosen the BETT show (Stand E85 - Olympia: 14th to 17th January) to demonstrate its latest caching, security and data backup devices - all designed especially for schools.

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About Equinet

Equinet was founded in 1998 and led the way in the manufacture and supply of devices giving schools the peace of mind to make full use of the internet. Using the company’s ability to deliver cost-effective, integrated hardware and software solutions, Equinet has developed a range of products with the twin themes of accelerating internet access to enable effective distribution and use of eLearning materials – complemented by enabling eSafety of pupils and security of both school network infrastructures and data.

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