



CONNECT

Connect
Telephone & Computer
Group

3rd Quarter 2007

Structured Cabling is More than Blue Wire!

What is structured cabling you ask? Structured cabling is a system that is designed to work together for a certain purpose. In current situations, we use that to describe low voltage wiring found in businesses that allows their people to communicate electronically. Some people call this Cat 5.

At Connect, we believe that the purpose of Structured Cabling is to provide an infrastructure that works not only for today's environment, but far into the future as well. When we purchase a new Television, we do not have the electrician re-wire the electrical outlet, so why would a company re-wire the office when we purchase a new computer network? Why is structured cabling important? It is the foundation of your electronic communications systems. Whether we are talking

about a phone, computer, or video cameras, the cabling is there to provide an expected level of performance that allows our technology to function.

Usually when people think about building or remodeling a building, it is the last thing they think of.



How ironic since the electronic communications devices are the lifeblood of your organization.

Connect and its technicians have invested countless hours and dollars to keep up with the new standards in structured cabling. Did you know that Cat 5 can transmit information at 100 megabits per second? Newer

offerings are boasting 10 gigabits per second, that is 100 times faster, for a small investment. Whenever I mention this, most customers say "Why would I need to transmit information that fast?" As we continue to migrate to more multimedia applications (graphics and video), bandwidth will be used up quickly.

The rule of thumb I try to live by is to try to get 2-3 generations of electronics per structured cabling system.

Connect has partnered with The Siemon Company to bring these new structured cabling systems to our clients. Connect has the ability to install these systems and provide a 20 year manufacturers warranty on the installed system. If you want to make sure the foundation of your network is treated as such, give us a call.

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THE POWER TO COMMUNICATE

What does Technology have to do with Quality of Life?

By Matt Duray

Apple's new iPhone came out and people were standing in line to get them so they could watch YouTube and surf the internet from their wireless phone. On the debut of Sony's new Playstation 3, one boy was killed for his game.

Being in the technology business, it is easy to get swept away by features and functions. All of the manufacturers are bombarding us everyday with all of the new features and how they will revolutionize our lives.

I have had two life changing moments in the last couple of months, one for the good, and one that I'm still trying to figure out the good. My wife and I recently had our second child, a precious little girl.

For the rest of the fathers out there, having a boy was great the first time, but nothing melts the heart of a father like a little girl.

The second was my four year old nephew passed away after an 18 month battle with Leukemia.

While reflecting on these things, it has lead me to an important conclusion. Yeah, we love our work, and we like who we work with and what it does, but ultimately, we go to work to provide for our families, which brings me to my point.

Technology can do a lot to increase your quality of life. The advent of the internet and cell phones is allowing us to get work done away from the office. We can still meet our obligations and

attend the baseball game or Ballet recital.

New breakthroughs in technology allow us to do our work from anywhere, yet communicate as effectively as if we were in the office.

If you would like to explore how our technologies can help increase your time with your family, please give us a call.



New Certifications

(to continue to provide the most certified technicians in the region, our employees constantly train to stay at the top)

- Connect achieves renewal with Cisco Voice Specialization
- Connect Achieves renewal on Cisco Premier Partner
- Connect Achieves Linksys certified Voice Partner status
- Connect Achieves Vertical Xcelerator IP dealer status.
- Randy Begger achieves renewal of the Cisco CCNA
- Aaron Berkram achieves the Dell Direct warranty certification
- Loren Peterson achieves the Dell Direct warranty certification
- Brian O'loughlin achieves the Vertical Xcelerator IP installation certification
- Matt Duray achieves the Vertical Xcelerator IP sales certification
- Matt Duray achieves the Linksys Voice reseller sales certification



How to avoid two costly mistakes in purchasing technology

There are a few things in life that will remain constant till the end of time. These include death, taxes, and the ever changing world of technology. As soon as we make a technological purchase today it, unfortunately, becomes outdated tomorrow. Ignoring your company for a moment, just think about the last time you bought a car. The moment it was driven off the lot the value dropped instantly by a few thousand dollars. This same scenario occurs in every technological purchase made by a company. As a result, more and more owners and chief financial officers are being slapped in the face with a basic business concept – **do not buy a depreciating asset.**

The method of buying technology on a lease agreement is not new or even earth shattering. Historically, both providers and manufacturers have offered leasing options. However, within the last year or so, subtle changes by a select group of business communications providers across the country have made leasing versus

buying the only decision for any business. These changes have eliminated technology's two greatest risks – **obsolescence and price** (also known as outright ownership). Voice and data communications is the heart and life blood of every company and having the latest technology has a major impact on an organization's efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness. As a result, The Connect Group launched the Current Technology Assurance Plan (C-TAP) with the assistance of Technology Assurance Group (TAG), an organization of independently owned North American business communications providers with combined revenue of over \$400 million in voice and data products and applications.

C-TAP ensures that the communications environments are refreshed with the latest advancements and value added solutions, thereby eliminating technology's obsolescence. For instance, updates (also known as refresh) to a company's voice and data system can occur anytime after 24 months with no change in their

monthly payment. Additionally, both labor charges and software upgrades are waived. If a product was purchased the old fashioned way, the business owner would get hit with thousands of dollars in software upgrade expenses or continue to use the system in a way that was not as productive as it should be. A program like C-TAP prevents this type of situation.

Here's a simple example that illustrates how C-TAP works. Companies are losing significant amounts of money on a daily basis because they don't have sufficient technology to effectively manage their organization. For example, many organizations do not have data back up, message on hold, or unified messaging while other companies are utilizing antiquated desktop PCs. Under C-TAP, companies that could not afford this technology before can now simply add it with no change in their monthly commitment.

Furthermore, C-TAP focuses on

the cost of technology rather than its price, thus eliminating the second risk. This is a mind set change for owners and many providers not engaged in a program of this sort. Because of C-TAP, companies are able to transfer technology costs from a capital expense to a fixed monthly expense absorbed by an organization's operating budget. This enhances the financial health from both tax and budgeting standpoints.

Programs like C-TAP have changed the way technology is purchased now and forever. It has successfully eliminated the traditional risks associated with technology – **obsolescence and price**. By taking control of the purchase process in this manner, the owner is finally experiencing a true win for their business because they now have the means that will increase profitability, while giving them a competitive advantage in their marketplace.

Internet Based Phone Lines

I think you all have seen the advertisements for Internet based phone lines. The technology is here, it is mainstream, and it is attractive.

We are finding that a business can purchase a phone line for a flat fee that will give them the capabilities of a regular phone line, although it is dramatically reducing the amount of money they pay for that service. So to

make it easy for you, I will give you the pro's and con's of internet based phone service:

1. Flat price includes all local and long distance charges (within the US)
2. Can provide Direct Dial services without the expensive services from the phone company.
3. Usually 20-30% less than regular phone lines.

Con's:

1. If you lose your internet service, you will lose your phone lines.
2. Voice quality cannot be guaranteed over the internet.

If you would like to look at the feasibility of this in your business, give us a call.



This technology could dramatically reduce your connectivity expenses



Let us help you get your arms around your provider bills!

Is it time for a Carrier Audit?

Most companies grow at such a pace that keeping track of that growth is a struggle. We, at Connect, understand that. We want you to know that we can help strengthen that growth through our carrier audits program. What we do is look at the way your business communicates and then verify that the connectivity you have through your carrier is consistent with your needs.

Some people say that they are in a contract or they know what they have, but you would be surprised to learn that some contracts have automatic renewal clauses that will tie you into that provider upon expiration of the contract if you do not notify them in writing prior to the expiration of the contract. We want to look at your connectivity and prepare a list for you of what you have, what you

are paying and when the contracts are due.

Most contracts were signed in the past, and as we all know technology prices drop all of the time, maybe it is time to renegotiate the contract to take advantage of new pricing structures to enhance the current relationship. The best part is there is no cost if you are part of our Gold Seal Partner Program.



31 Days lost each year putting out IT fires!

Does this sound like your company? A new survey out says that the typical business manager is losing 12% of their week dealing with IT fires. I guess it is no wonder why business owners are so frustrated with their technology. It is my belief that part of the reason is unclear direction and planning from the IT department.

We have the answer! With Connect's new Hosted IT staff, we provide the people to plan, strategize, implement and maintain your mission critical IT systems to allow you to focus on your business.

If the above report is true, then 31.2 work days per year, you are focusing on IT rather than on your business. If you are focusing on other areas for that much time, your competition may be getting an advantage that you don't have.

If you would like to talk to us about how you can concentrate on your business another 31 days each year, please give us a phone call and we can explain how our IT staff can allow you to focus on your business.

Source: Partners in IT, a UK based service management company

A new survey suggests its no wonder business managers are often frustrated with their technology. Here's a sampling of some of the problems:

80% of the companies surveyed claimed problems with IT downtime had been an issue.

74% of business managers queried said they spent 12% of their week dealing with various IT issues.

77% of midsize company managers surveyed estimated that 13% of their IT investment was wasted due to insufficient up-keep.

90% of IT Respondents in large companies admitted that downtime was such an issue that half cited it as a serious problem for them and their colleagues.



Your Company's Biggest Asset is You!

By Chris Schaubel

As a small business owner what is your biggest challenge? Is it providing the proper benefits for employees? Or is it employee retention? Our bet is that it varies from day to day. Perhaps the biggest challenge you have is all the hats you wear as an owner, which may require being in more than one location at the same time.

As a small business owner in Montana, there is a good chance that you may have more than one location to manage. This creates the challenge of being omnipresent. We know that we can't be everywhere at the same time, but that still doesn't make up for the needs of your business. One way to tackle that problem is to spend an incredible amount of time behind the windshield, and if you do not have a chauffeur, that time is usually non-productive. How do we propose to fix this problem, and still allow an owner to give the required attention to remote locations?

An easy solution could be Video Conferencing. The advancements in the video conferencing

technology now offer a cost effective and efficient way to communicate with remote locations without neglecting responsibilities. Video conferencing has come to the technology forefront, because it can be deployed over your existing WAN (wide area network) or LAN (local area network). Deploying this technology over your existing network will help better utilize the network connectivity you already pay for, and let you be in more than one place at the same time.

The video conferencing technology will allow you to show sales reports, revenue projections, and conduct meetings at the same time. This newer technology gives you the ability to collaborate while meeting so that everyone has the same documents.

Some uses that my clients have had for Video Conferencing are: Interviewing new hire candidates, Employee meetings, Sales appointments, Negotiations, etc. In short, any reason people have to get together, can be made more productive through the



use of video conferencing.

The advancements in video conferencing have made the technology more affordable, and more easily deployable. Technology exists for only four reasons: To increase profitability, Decrease expenses, Increase customer loyalty, and Increase Employee loyalty. If any technology does not do any of these things there is absolutely no reason to purchase it.

If you have any questions regarding video conferencing technology, and if it is a solution for your business, call your Executive Advisor at Connect Telephone & Computer Group. Your Executive Advisor will review your business processes and assess your technology needs and make recommendations tailored to your business requirements.

Need to be in two places at once? Video Conferencing technology prices have come down.



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*THE **POWER** TO COMMUNICATE*

Training is the foundation of Success

As business owners, we are constantly looking at new ways to become more effective in our businesses. One way that I have found to remain at the top is to constantly train ourselves and our employees.

I heard an interesting comment one day that if we train our people, they will just leave, but if we look at the alternative; what if we don't train them and they stay? I really don't know which is worse.

Inevitably, we understand that change is part of life and the people who are taught how to deal with those changes are better able to adapt.

We, at Connect, make training a part of the overall plan for our people. Without training, we cannot continue to provide the new and exciting technologies to advance the businesses of our

clients.

The Connect Group is committed to your success. We understand that for our business to

We are now providing 1 day business focused classes every month. These classes are on industry standard software and

on your investment.

We are in the process of initiating a new wave of training geared towards the busy executives. This is what we call our Executive Technology Webinar series. The focus of these is to keep them limited to one topic, very non-sales and non-technical, more focused on the business benefits.

The best part is that you can attend these seminars from the comfort of your own desk over the lunch hour. We have secured a new technology that allows us to share our desktops with users and attach a voice call so that we can provide this training in the most efficient way possible.

If you have any ideas on topics, would like to register or would like to get more information, please call us.



succeed, your business needs to succeed. That is why we have invested in our training facility.

on the phone systems that we sell. We know that if the users know how to use the technology, then you get more return