

The Mobile Worker: Remote Broadband Access To The Corporate LAN

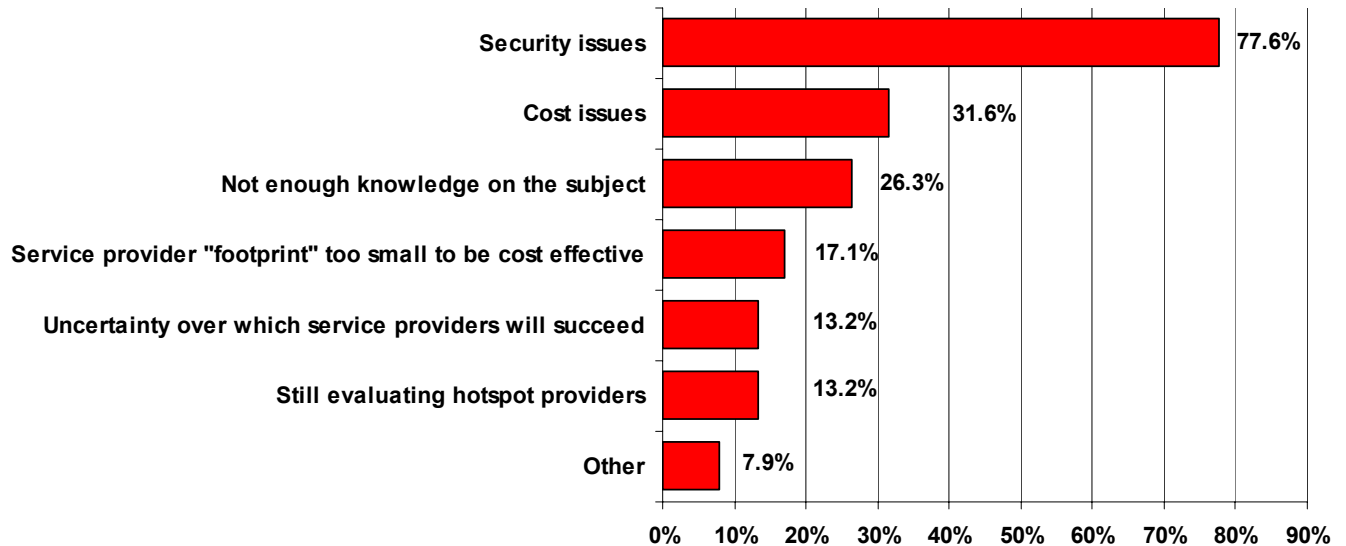
Employees have been using dial-up connections to remotely access their companies' LANs for a number of years. More recently, however, employees are increasingly using broadband connections for such remote access. Such broadband remote access connections are made both through fixed line access as well as wireless access, and are done both while the employee is at home and while he or she is traveling. When traveling, the "public" area broadband access used are typically referred to as "Hotspots" and consist of hotels providing broadband services to their guests, broadband access points in airports and train stations, Internet-enabled cafés, public broadband facilities offered on corporate campuses and building lobbies for visitors, and so on. As a result of the increasing use of broadband for remote access, a number of different types of service providers have entered the market, including cellular providers such as T-Mobile and Verizon, roaming providers such as Boingo, niche Hotspot providers such as Wayport, as well as fixed line providers.

The growing use of broadband remote access has raised a number of important issues that companies must now face. First, the use of broadband for remote access increases security risks for companies, due to always on Internet connections and static IP addresses, in addition to concerns raised by wireless access owing to perceived weaknesses in Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP), the wireless security protocol. Consequently, companies must decide whether the security risks make it too dangerous to even allow broadband remote access, and if it will be allowed, under what conditions and what security precautions. Second, companies must decide whether they will contract with a Hotspot services provider, and if so, what type of provider. Third, companies must determine if their employees will be provided budgets for broadband remote access.

- Companies represented in the panel were fairly evenly split overall on whether they allowed broadband remote access to their corporate LANs; 50.3% indicated they did allow it, while 46.0% said they did not. Segmenting the responses by company size, larger companies were more likely to allow it, while smaller companies were less likely to do so.
- Lack of need and security concerns were the top reasons cited by companies both for why they did not currently allow broadband remote access as well as why they had no plans to implement it in the future. Among those companies that do not currently allow it, but plan to offer it in the future, most said they would allow broadband remote access 7 months or later from now, rather than within the next 6 months.
- Most employees who are using broadband remote access are using it both while at home and while traveling, rather than exclusively at home or exclusively while traveling. Only a small percentage of employees at panel companies actually use it, though, typically less than 25%, and among those that do, those that actually use it frequently (more than 1 – 2 times per week) vary widely from company to company.

- Panelist companies that permit broadband remote access are fairly split on whether they allow access from public area “Hotspots” with a slightly larger percentage — 49.4% — saying they do not allow Hotspot access, while 42.2% saying they do. Security concerns were by far the most cited reason for not allowing Hotspot access, at 77.6%.
- Hotels were the most likely Hotspot venue to be used by employees, at 87.7%. Airport/train stations and “public networks” in office buildings and corporate campuses were also widely used. Cafés received much less mention as a venue for Hotspot access, however.
- Cellular providers were the top choice among panelists, at 50.9%, when asked with what type of Hotspot service provider they would consider contracting. However, more panelist stated they did not know what type of provider they would select than cited either roaming providers such as Boingo or niche Hotspot providers such as Wayport.
- Security was clearly the top technology concern with broadband remote access, and most of the panel companies have implemented VPNs for remote access and require their employees to use VPNs.

Why doesn't your company allow remote access through a hotspot/public venue?
(n = 76; multiples accepted)



Source: In-Stat/MDR, 9/02

For further information on the LAN Research Panel, or about this specific report, please contact Matt Woods at mwoods@reedbusiness.com