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Poll Results: Are up to speeds good enough?

Wednesday 13 February 2013 16:26:55 by Andrew Ferguson

Our latest poll looked at whether the claims of 'up to' in broadband speeds are still a major problem and whether there would be any room for a service that could remove the 'up to' gamble from its service.

Of course there is one obvious solution and that would be install fixed speed connection services, avoiding the variability that distance and interference can introduce, and to that end the **FTTH Council Europe is pushing FTTH and FTTB** technology as a solution.

The poll attracted a good response with over 1350 people responding and the results show that while by and large changes to the way broadband has to be advertised in the UK are working. The rules state that for a speed to be used in an advertisement 10% or more of customers should be able to get that speed or faster, **27% of respondents got the speed advertised or faster**. Alas if we look at the lower end some 46% described their service as being well below the advertised speed or giving them unacceptable speeds. For some providers they have in the last 12 months removed product speeds from advertising, or providers only talking about download speeds, with the upload speed hidden away in the small print of the contract.

How close do you get to the advertised product speed?

Well below (34%)

Unacceptable (13%)

Don't Know (2%)

Faster (8%)

Matches (19%)

Slightly slower (24%)

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Source: www.thinkbroadband.com

In the UK providers generally follow a voluntary code of practice on speeds that should give the customer a personalised connection speed estimate at the time they actually order a service. This should be more accurate than the headline figures that feature in the adverts, for fixed speed connection services like DOCSIS cable products and FTTH/B products this will of course match the advertised speed. The responses from those taking part in the poll show 42% are getting the quoted speed or faster, and some **27% get a speed that is well below the estimate or considered unacceptable**. While the experience is a significant improvement on that appear in advertising it still shows that consumers are getting a variable experience and that UP TO is still misleading people.

Are your speeds in line with the personalised estimate your provider should have supplied at sign up?

Well below (18%)

Unacceptable (9%)

Not given estimate (7%)

Don't Know (3%)

Faster (15%)

Slightly slower (21%)

Matches (27%)

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The UK broadband market is often touted as one of the most price conscious markets in Europe, so to find that **26% of those responding would pay around £5 extra to get a speed guarantee** on their product and a further 28% saying they would consider it suggests that there is a market for providers to offer a service that carries some form of guarantee. While guarantee's are common with business grade products these usually carry expensive price tags, but it seems there is scope for a service to offer something like a minimum connection speed and throughput guarantee.

If another provider was to offer some form of speed guarantee would you consider switching even if the service cost £3 - £5 extra per month?

No - cost (16%)

No - in contract (11%)

No Opinion (7%)

Definitely (26%)

Would consider (28%)

Undecided (12%)

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Source: www.thinkbroadband.com

The issue of UP TO and the distance problems that plague the ADSL and FTTC services are set to clash with the increasing popularity of watching TV and films over the Internet. In the UK we are already seeing speeds for early adopters of VDSL2 (FTTC) products see speeds drop

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Bye bye VM

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http://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/5718-poll-results-are-up-to-speeds-good-enough.html[25/02/2013 08:52:31]

due to crosstalk caused by take-up and other unexplained drops in speed.

The issues of capacity at the broadband provider are already technology neutral as the core networks are all fibre based and can be scaled fairly easily, but as people at home start to stream HD video, with children watching a different film to the parents the need for reliable stable connection speeds is increasing. Of course pure fibre (FTTH) networks will not solve the problem of a provider trying to cram twenty thousand 100 Mbps customers onto just 1 Gbps of Internet capacity, but once the fibre infrastructure is in place over the whole link increasing speeds to fix these problems should be easier.

The FTTH Council Europe covered the topic of **transparency on speeds** a few weeks ago and it seems 'up to' is also becoming a **big issue with electric cars** and the variable performance of batteries in different weathers and driving loads. At least with broadband up to figures you don't have to turn down your heater to go further when its cold.

One aspect that is yet to be really explored on a large scale in the UK, is the ability for the fibre to the home connection to deliver two connections as easily as one, i.e. 20 Mbps of fixed capacity for connecting devices like a TV or set-top box, and a more variable throughput service for general Internet access. The original **HomeChoice VoD service** would reserve 2 Mbps, but this meant that Internet access was heavily restricted on ADSL services when it was around a few years ago.

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## Comments

### Posted by fibrebunny 12 days ago

I thought the last question was nonsensical, given no provider can guarantee more speed than the line can handle. Add to that, nobody will roll out fibre for a fiver a month either.

### Posted by andrew ( staff member) 12 days ago

@fibrebunny

Gigaclear/B4rn are doing fibre for £30, £37 a month, which once you add copper line rental to the price of FTTC it is about same price. So some people are doing it

FTTH/P avoids the line handling options too.

Not everyone will pay more, but if you get enough early adopters the rest will join in time.

### Posted by LT38 11 days ago

personaly i think this upto lark needs to be stopped as its a farse.

I have to have VM as i cant have any other provider (except mobile dongles)ive had nothing but rubbish from them for over 3 years and i dont believe i have ever had the speed i pay for. Telling me im on upto 60mb but ive never had a decent connection above 10mb and when it does go above 10mb its unstable and unusable. there should stricter rules regarding this im fed up paying for something i need but doesnt work as it should 90% of the time is a joke

### Posted by LT38 11 days ago

VM charge in tiers 10mb 20mb 30mb and now 60mb 100mb each one is a different price I pay for 60mb but get less than 15mb on a regular basis i complain VM say well you was told its UPTO and now they have taken away the 10mb service lmao its a joke one that needs to stop. NO ONE would go into a shop and buy anything if it said content may vary and be UPTO a certain amount

### Posted by rian 11 days ago

FTTH/P could be a good option for those who suffer from a poor phone line. Even for a good line, it could suffer from many conditions such as poor weather, engineer mistake and many things, Fibre may be a good option to provide a guarantee speed.

### Posted by herdwick 11 days ago

I agree the last question was weak, I read it as "if there's some salesman on the phone offering you a speed guarantee would you switch" rather than a reference to a different mode of service provision.

### Posted by GMAN99 11 days ago

So a quick look at the survey says to me, most people are getting less than their headline up to speeds (no surprise their based on the tech) but also they are mostly what was estimated by the checker

So the two together say to me the customer got what they were told they were going to get?

@LT38, your issue is unacceptable can't blame tech for that

### Posted by andrew ( staff member) 11 days ago

@gman99 Roughly speaking yes, the 10% rule is working.

Still significant numbers that are not even close to the estimate it seems. Reasons why is a very long article

### Posted by New\_Londoner 11 days ago

@Andrew

IIRC the Gigaclear service for £37 a month is 10Mbps, compared to the FTTC services which averages around 65Mbps at a slightly lower cost inclusive of line rental. Not sure that the £37

represents very good value for money, especially without even offering a choice of ISP.

**Posted by andrew (tb staff member) 11 days ago**  
10 Mbps guaranteed and burst to Gig

**Posted by chrysalis 11 days ago**  
I see no reason why either estimated speeds cant be garunatueed for duration of contract or install sync speed (day 1 sync). Then it gives an incentive for isps and openreach to do monthly contracts again as it then removes that obligation, the garunatuee gives customers incentive to sign up for longer periods, both sides benefit. On throughput the best solution is to provide a peak time speed as the headline speed.

**Posted by chrysalis 11 days ago**  
LT38 to be fair to VM at least their pricing allows those suffering to save some cash, eg. if on 120mbit service and get 20mbit speeds then downgrade to 30mbit product to fit the service you get, on xDSL the packages were less forgiving prior to FTC launch as even if someone downgraded to 8mbit adsl1 the price was often the same as adsl2+ anyway which I thought was very wrong, FTTC doesnt have quite the same problem as 40mbit services are often cheaper than the 80mbit ones. Although I do think there should be a low priced 20mbit FTTC service good for those with very bad FTTC lines.

**Posted by pcoventry76 11 days ago**  
@ Andrew  
  
Problem is Gigaclear only want areas that make headlines. I offered them over 1000 customers all willing to pay the high install charge and the monthly cost (of which 55 were businesses wanting the top business product) and gigaclear didn't seem interested. They e-mailed to say they would check the the proximity of the town to the fibre ring and said a duck was stopping them. The same duct all the other utilities were put through - pathetic excuse. Now it looks like BT will get here first.  
  
BT can have the estimated £60K a month if it's not good enough for Gigaclear!

**Posted by Michael\_Chare 11 days ago**  
Gigaclear charge £100 for a DIY connection and install, which includes some fibre cable and an ONT/router. I don't think that could be regarded as high. The customer is responsible for the connection from a junction on the property boundary, much like a water supply.

**Posted by GMAN99 10 days ago**  
@ Michael\_Chare that is if their ring is close by of course

**Posted by otester 9 days ago**  
@ LT38  
  
What about DSL?

**Posted by dragon1945 7 days ago**  
I pay for "up to 8MB" I get less than a quarter of that. A shop would not be allowed to sell a box of Detergent which was less than a quarter full.  
This morning's "high" was 1.92 MB. I wouldn't mind if they just replaced the old copper cable with a new one. That hasn't been replaced in the 47 years I have lived here to my knowledge. Problems include noise on the line and dropped calls. I replaced the phones as my provider said that DECT phones sometimes caused problems. No difference. The chances of getting Fibre in my lifetime are about the same as my chances winning the Lottery jackpot.

**Posted by andrew (tb staff member) 7 days ago**  
@dragon1945  
  
Changing 4km or so of copper is costly and may make no difference to the performance. Copper was chosen for its long life, if the speed is low for the attenuation you have, then there may be some bad joints to remake.  
  
Did the ISP not give you an estimate at signup?

**Posted by FTTH 7 days ago**  
It's great marketing, I'm sure if others were able to get away with it they would.  
  
Upto 100% Beef Burgers  
Upto 100% fat free butter  
  
Or a factual one  
  
Gigabit FTTP - uses less than 0.1% of the optic fibres capacity.  
You get what you pay for.

**Posted by Somerset 6 days ago**  
Surely 'Up to a Gigabit FTTP'.

**Posted by FTTH 6 days ago**  
Depends whats on the ends.  
  
Gigaclear for example do not sell as 'upto' 1Gb, they will sell 100/100 (UL/DL) reserved with

1Gb burst when available.

If you want a guaranteed 1Gb, you pay for 1Gb.

I'm sure if you wanted 10Gb, you could do it - you will pay plenty but no optical infrastructure would need to change.

**Posted by mcompton69 about 22 hours ago**

"In the UK we are already seeing speeds for early adopters of VDSL2 (FTTC) products see speeds drop due to crosstalk caused by take-up and other unexplained drops in speed"  
I think the plain English campaign enforcement team will be all over your ass on this paragraph! :-)

**Posted by mcompton69 about 22 hours ago**

The way I see the problem is two fold:  
1) The network for receiving broadband in the UK is not universal in its age/construction/capability/capacity so the ISPs have this catch all phrase to cover themselves on the service they provide. Some would argue they should know what it's capable of or have ways to test its capability especially when Govt sets targets.....

**Posted by mcompton69 about 21 hours ago**

.... 2) Businesses have exploited this catch all phrase based on the unknown network capability, whereby they can sell the SAME bandwidth multiple times, which everyone would agree is totally out of order. WRT the Virgin Media comments above and other similar comments about same, Hey should say "your service will be up to xxx as long as your neighbours are not using their Internet at the same time you are".  
Can you imagine your electrician saying you can only cook you dinner when next door are not ironing?  
The industry needs regulation and OfCom is not fit for purpose.

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