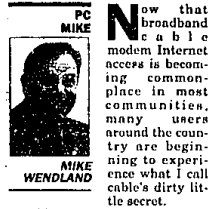


Is Internet cable a victim of its growing popularity?



MIKE WENDLAND

PC MIKE
Now that broadband cable modems are becoming commonplace in most communities, many users around the country are beginning to experience what I call cable's dirty little secret.
Cable Internet service is slowing, too.
So many people are taking advantage of the cable company's offers to increase surfing speed by up to 100 percent that the system is starting to choke. There are also broadband pigs, people running high volume Web sites off cable modems, even though this is prohibited by most systems. These pigs, who run what cable people call "rogue servers," jam entire systems.
The results of the huge demand and the broadband pigs are massive slowdowns, traffic backups and inadequate service in many places. All around the country, cable companies are adding extra "nodes," or neighborhood distribution centers, so that everyone's not using the

same line.
In metropolitan Detroit, the Comcast Online and the AT&T Home systems have been growing at tremendous rates. And so far, I'm receiving only scattered complaints about service. Most users here seem delighted at the speed of broadband. Let's hope it stays that way.
But elsewhere, where cable Internet has been around a bit longer, system slowdowns are becoming commonplace.
What's happening is the demand is far outstripping the capacity of some systems. Remember, cable Internet is different than cable TV. TV is basically passive.
The information comes in and that's it. So thousands of users can share the same node. Not so with cable Internet, which is interactive, or two-way, and gobles up bandwidth. Cable Internet also works just like any other computer network. When everyone is on at the same time, it slows.
Tied closely with the slowdown is inadequate service. Just calling the service desk of your cable company. It took me three days a while ago just to get a real person to answer when I had some problems with my

AT&T service.
From the e-mail I've been getting, it seems as if busy signals and hour-long waits to speak to a technician are now the norm with some cable Internet providers.
This mess is going to get much worse before it gets better. The cable Internet industry needs to redirect thousands of more people into technical support around the country and thousands more in the field to add nodes. I'm already hearing from people fed up with cable in some regions who are switching to DSL.
While DSL service is considerably slower than cable Internet, DSL still beats the fastest modem by about 25 times and because it's a one on one connection, isn't going to degrade as more users come on line sharing your same node, as with cable.

Wireless phones offer Internet
The wireless phone revolution is in full motion. Though there are still some protocol issues the industry needs to straighten out, this year will see the end of cellular and the total domination of digital wireless phones. Many of us will soon use a wireless phone as our main phone. And they'll

replace pagers, too, offering up e-mail retrieval and "web clippings" of stock prices, sports scores and breaking news from the Internet. The technology is already in place. This will be the year it catches on. I'm now testing out the latest offering from AirTouch and I'm impressed. They call the service "Mobile Web" and it offers instant access to Internet content, e-mail, information services, mobile originated messaging and address book and to-do list functions. Oh yeah, it's also a wireless telephone.

Onward and upward
Two new studies released this week indicate the Internet growth rate is showing no signs of slowing down. The Strategis Group says 53 percent of the U.S. population is now regularly online and that women make up nearly half - 49 percent - of all Net users. The study says the Internet has grown by 25 percent since 1998. Another new Internet measurement survey from the Canadian research firm Angus Reid puts the current worldwide Internet population at 300 million users and projects 1 billion users by 2005.

Web attacks
The problem with Internet

security is most corporations that have been hit by hackers are reluctant to report it because they worry it may hurt their image with consumers or adversely affect their stock prices. But among those 640 banks, corporations and financial sites that did respond to the FBI's latest survey, measurable losses directly attributable to hack attacks or security breaches cost a whopping \$265 million last year. That's double the rate of 1998. This year's figures are expected to be staggering more. "It's going from bad to worse," said a spokesman for the firm that conducted the FBI study.

Trying again
You got to hand it to Microsoft. It doesn't give up. Even though its cumbersome and klutzy Windows CE handheld computer operating system has been a dismal failure, it keeps coming back for more marketplace beatings. Within two weeks, Microsoft and its partner companies like Casio and Compaq will rename the CE devices as PocketPCs and introduce a slew of new models to consumers. These units will offer color, of course, and multimedia capabilities, as well as an e-book reader. Microsoft's target is

Palm Computing, which has about 90 percent of the handheld market. Don't count Microsoft out. They know how to compete. Remember when Netscape held 90 percent of the Internet browser market? Now Microsoft's Internet Explorer holds the lead.

While CE sure hasn't been popular with consumers, eventually Microsoft may just get it right. That's why Palm just added its spectacular color Ilife model and is aggressively signing up designers and programmers, adding new software and forming new partnerships with Internet portal sites. The handheld computer battle is shaping up to be one of the year's best high tech stories.
"73" until next week.

Mike Wendland covers the Internet for NBC-TV NewsChannel stations across the country. He is the author of a series of Internet books. You can reach him through his Web site at <http://www.pcmike.com> and hear him Monday through Friday at 6:26 p.m. on NewsRadio 950, WWJ, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 4-6 p.m. on TalkRadio 1270, WXYT.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

Items from the Observerland area for the Business Calendar can be sent to: Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150 attention: Business Calendar.

THUR, MARCH 30
SERVICE CORPS OF RETIRED EXECUTIVES MEETING
Marketing Plan Workshop from 8:30 a.m. to noon, Executive Office Building of Oakland County, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac. Topics include: diagnosing marketing problems, market tar-

geting, and advertising and publicity. Cost: \$30. To register, contact SCORE at (313) 226-7947 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. weekdays.

WED, APRIL 5
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
The Michigan Business and Professional Association will sponsor the 4th annual Women's Leadership Conference and Distinguished Service Awards Luncheon Wednesday, April 5 at Burton Manor in Livonia. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Conference is scheduled from 8:30

a.m. to 2 p.m. Two workshops are planned: "How to Build a Successful Personal Strategic Plan" followed by "Is Your Business Checklist in Order?" The total cost is \$50; cost for luncheon only is \$25. For information about attending, co-sponsoring or advertising, contact MBPA at (810) 979-6322.

FRIDAY, APRIL 14
BUSINESS IN CHINA
Oakland University's Professional Development and Strategic Outreach, School of Education and Human Services (SEHS)

will present "Opening Doors in the 21st Century. Creating Business Opportunities in China after WTO." The seminar will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, April 14 in Oakland University's Meadow Brook Ballroom. Co-sponsors include: The Detroit Regional Chamber, Pontiac Export Assistance Center - U.S. Department of Commerce, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and Leonard Woodcock Legacy. The seminar is an introductory course for individuals and organizations interested in developing or expanding markets in China. Jerome D. Hill, J.D., Ph.D. and

Ledong Li will share their expertise on expanding interests and overcoming the challenges of doing business in China. Cost is \$295 and includes a Chinese luncheon and handout material. The registration deadline is Wednesday, April 5. Enrollment is limited. Contact the Professional Development office at (248) 370-3033 for a brochure or to register for the seminar. Fax registration with VISA or MasterCard payment is accepted at (248) 370-3137.

FRI, MAY 12

Fiesta HISP/NA Ball
The Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce hosts its 11th Anniversary Fiesta Hispana Ball at the Ritz Carlton in Dearborn. The VIP reception begins at 6:30 p.m. followed by dinner and dancing at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Bo Anderson, executive in charge of worldwide purchasing for General Motors Corp., is event chairman. The ball provides an opportunity to network with business representatives and meet corporate sponsors. For tickets, contact MHCC at (248) 208-9915.

BUSINESS MARKETPLACE

Items for Business Marketplace are welcome from all companies and residents active in the Observer-area business community. Items should be typed or legibly written and sent to: Business Marketplace, c/o The Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150.

Women executives
Executive Women International, a business women's organization dedicated to the professional development of its members, is seeking new members. EWI helps members build professional relationships with career women and promote their business or company. For more information, contact Detroit-Windsor Chapter president Madeleine Phillips at (313) 921-1200, or e-mail: mphilips@psychemicals.com.

Identity Marketing PR
Paul Keaman and Mark Winter of Identity Marketing and Public Relations in Plymouth announced the agency has entered into an agreement with Data Management of Bloomfield Hills to provide marketing, advertising and communications counsel and media relations services. Identity is a full-service marketing and public relations agency specializing in business-to-business communication strategies and programs. Identity is located in downtown Plymouth at 470 Forest Place, Suite 18, (734) 456-6330, fax (734) 455-3020.

Career Center Temps
Career Center Temps has opened an office in the O'Hara Building Complex, 39293 Plymouth Road in Livonia. The company currently has offices in Hartland and Commerce Township. The Livonia office is the first in Wayne County. For more information, call (248) 360-8331.

New Haas Factory Outlets
Haas Automation Inc., the largest machine tool builder in America, has opened a Haas Factory Outlet at 23900 Freeway Park Drive in Farmington Hills to provide sales and service to eastern Michigan. The grand opening is from noon to 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 5, and Thursday, April 6. The event is open to the public, and there will be prizes and refreshments. Visitors will tour the 7,500-square-foot facility and see live demonstrations of the latest Haas

machine tools in action. For more information, call (248) 476-8787.

Work Smart Summit
The Livonia Chamber of Commerce's Livonia Economic Development Partnership and the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center will cosponsor the Work Smart Summit 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thurs-

day, April 13, at Laurel Manor in Livonia. Registration is \$95 per person or \$80 each for two or more persons from one company. Fee includes breakfast, lunch and networking reception. Livonia Chamber members receive a special discounted fee. For information or to register, call Marva Bartell at (1-888) 414-6682, ext. 4058, or visit Web site www.mmtc.org/summit.

Affordable Senior Living from AMERICAN HOUSE SENIOR LIVING RESIDENCES

Call For Details...

Birmingham (248) 645-0420 Stone (248) 853-2330

Hazel Park (248) 545-0707 Elmwood (248) 851-1980 Oakland (248) 335-7020

Birchcrest (810) 739-9494 Farmington Hills (248) 471-9141 Troy (248) 589-3555

Are You Depressed?

Answer the following questions based on the last 2 weeks or more.

YES NO

1. I feel sad, unhappy, self critical
2. I feel tired and have little energy
3. I have trouble sleeping or eating (either too much or too little)
4. I don't enjoy activities that I used to
5. I feel uneasy, restless, irritable or guilty
6. I have trouble concentrating, remembering things or making decisions

If you answered "yes" to 3 or more statements, you may be suffering from depression, a serious condition affecting millions of Americans. The Institute for Health Studies is currently looking for individuals experiencing the above symptoms to participate in a research study of investigational medication for depression. If you are interested, all research related costs and study medication are provided at no cost. Get answers and relief about depression.

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH STUDIES
(517) 349-5505 1 (800) 682-6663
Robert J. Bielski, M.D.

Keep Cool.

\$250 OFF OR 6 MONTHS SAME AS CASH!

Looking to stay cool this season? Act now and save up to \$250* off or Six Months Same as Cash* on a new Bryant Air Conditioning System during our pre-season sale. Call today!

bryant

michcon home services
HEATING & COOLING SALES • SERVICE • INSTALLATION
1-888-234-2340

*Contract must be signed by March 31, 2000. Excludes all contracts prior to March 9, 2000. With approved credit. Certain restrictions may apply. MichCon Home Services is a subsidiary of MCM Energy Group, Inc. MichCon Home Services was formed by combining three of the best heating & cooling companies in Southeastern Michigan: Flame Furnace Company, Tri-Masters Heating & Cooling and Kopke Heating & Cooling.