



## Broadband Opens the Door to Greater Efficiency and New Markets

Prescott Architectural Ironmongers is a well established firm, founded in 1927, which specialises in commercial, domestic and designer door furniture. Until this year they were happy to use tried and trusted business methods that involved lots of paper, postage and an old PC for typing up letters and invoices.

The joint managing director of the St. Helens based firm, Colin Prescott, admits that he was doubtful about whether the Internet would be cost effective, and benefit his business. His first experiences did nothing to dispel this skepticism. He remembers that using a dial-up connection for web access "seemed to take forever. It's really important to us to see pictures of products before we order them to make sure we get what we need. But the images took so long to view. It was frustrating as well as expensive."

### Faster responses and time savings

However, as an increasing number of Prescott's suppliers and customers took up broadband, Colin felt pressure to keep in step. He took the leap in the summer of 2005 - and became an instant convert. He observes that, "customers need answers straight away. Now they can take a picture on their phone and e-mail it through to us instantly. We can get the order out that same day. Previously it would have taken a lot longer. And we used to fax architectural drawings. Now they can be e-mailed which offers much better quality. I'm sure that this increased responsiveness and efficiency is winning us business we wouldn't previously have got."



*Colin Prescott accessing the company's wireless network*

*"The time saved by using a high speed connection equates to serious cash saving"*

### Key Facts

- **Door furniture supplier increases speed and quality of customer service by e-mailing photos and drawings**
- **Mobile broadband used to check stock availabilities and e-mail order details when visiting customers**
- **Broadband led to installation of wireless network.**



## *“I really can’t imagine how we got on without broadband”*

Broadband has also solved the problem of accessing product images, and made it easier to find new suppliers. Colin remembers “one occasion when a good customer wanted a specialist part that we couldn’t get through our usual sources. I accessed the Internet and within seven minutes I had found and ordered it. Before we had broadband, dial-up would have been too slow so I’d have spent a frustrating half-a-day going through catalogues and ringing up possible suppliers.”

### **Initial success leads to increased investment in equipment and skills**

These positive experiences have stimulated more investment in both equipment and skills. Prescott has purchased more computers and installed a wireless network so staff can move around the premises with a laptop, and still be connected to the Internet. The accounts team too have have been trained in on-line accounting software so that they can invoice by e-mail.

Colin has also acquired a laptop so that he can work away from his desk. He remains connected through a home broadband connection, or a card which allows him to send data at broadband speed via his mobile phone when on the move. “The flexibility,” he says, “is fantastic. When I’m with customers I can check stock availabilities, and e-mail the details of any orders taken to the office so that they can get on with ordering them, and invoicing. And I can pick up my own e-mails wherever I am.” There are also plans to move into e-commerce by putting Prescott’s entire catalogue on the Internet so that customers can browse, order and, if they wish, pay online. This will allow the company to respond more easily to the increased number of enquiries it is getting from other parts of the country, and even Europe.

### **Serious cost savings have been achieved**

Colin is sure that “the time saved by using a high speed connection equates to serious cash saving.” He gives the example of providing a quote for a customer. This used to take up to half-a-day to prepare, and at least a day to arrive when posted. Today the use of templates and web access means that it can be prepared in half-an-hour, and e-mailed instantly.

Colin reflects that “in just a matter of months a high speed connection has made a huge difference to the way we work. The costs are fixed whatever our use and the speed is fantastic. I know it sounds clichéd but I really can’t imagine how we got on without broadband. I wonder how much more successful we’d have been if we had gone for it years ago.”

### **Further Information**

The Northwest Regional Development Agency wants the region’s people and businesses to benefit from the new opportunities created by the digital revolution. It has worked with partners to establish Digital Development Agencies in Cheshire and Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside and Lancashire to achieve this at local level. The agencies help identify ICT priorities for their areas, work with local organisations to identify projects to address them, and secure the resources to make these projects happen.