

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS



Marolina Outdoor Inc. Lures Customers With Innovative Apparel



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BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Do you need a technology refresher? As the Internet and all its applications continue to advance, it can be too easy to forget the simple, yet important, basics. This issue of *Business Connections* explores some of the key concepts businesses should remember and regularly revisit.

The first one is "faster is better." On page 3, we describe all the ways **Velocity Fiber Helps Businesses Speed Up**. They include faster speeds when you upload large documents, work with layered files, view video tutorials, and use cloud storage and backup.

This issue's Business Spotlight on page 4 features **Marolina Outdoor Inc.**, a company that sells functional clothing to America's outdoorsmen. The business knows that "customer service never goes out of style," and it takes advantage of Internet speeds that support fast, efficient care whenever customers call.

Another basic to remember is, "expect the best, but prepare for the worst." We offer tips for **Managing Your Online Reputation** on page 6. Ensuring your good name remains intact isn't hard, but it does require paying attention to how others are talking about you online.

Finally, on page 7, we talk about **How to Safeguard Your Data**. The rule to keep in mind here is "backup early and often." Ideally, you should have a system in place that backs up your data without you having to take any action, and Home Telecom can help you do it.

Now that you've had your technology refresher, give a call to let us know how we can help you update the basics. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

William S. Helmly
President & COO
Home Telecom



live life ahead.

Velocity Fiber Helps Businesses Speed Up

Gigabit Business Class Internet is now available to businesses of all sizes



While Home Telecom has been able to offer Gigabit Internet to large businesses for some time over dedicated Metro Ethernet connections, we recently started providing Gigabit Business Class Internet to small and medium-sized businesses over our Velocity Fiber network. A Velocity Fiber connection enables you to take advantage of the most advanced voice, video, data, and security services through one connection. With gigabit speeds, you and your employees will notice a reduction in the time it takes to do things like upload large documents, work with layered files, view video tutorials, and use cloud storage and backup.

William S. Helmly, President and COO of Home Telecom, says, "Access to Velocity Fiber gives local businesses speeds up to 100 times faster than the average Internet connection. Our fiber connections go all the way to every business, so Home Telecom is able to offer services as robust and dependable as those available anywhere in the world."

Internet Coordinator Heather McGrath comments, "Fiber is more reliable than other technologies for delivering telecommunications. In addition, it allows symmetrical (equal upload and download) speeds, and is future proof. Fiber is the only technology that has the capability to deliver on our needs of tomorrow, whatever they may be."

Future-Proof Fiber

Since 2004, Home Telecom has been investing in future-proof fiber infrastructure. To date, we have over 60,000 miles of fiber strands passing over 9,000 businesses and 15,000 residential homes. While only 1 in 5 residences and businesses are serviced by fiber in the U.S., Home Telecom uses fiber to deliver services to over 50 percent of our 25,000 customers.

McGrath notes, "While the buzz around fiber has increased recently, Home Telecom realized early on that it was the

only technology that would be able to keep up with the ever increasing needs of our customer. By utilizing our fiber network, we became South Carolina's first gigabit Internet provider in 2013 and we are currently planning a 10 Gbps trial this year. Our Velocity Fiber network has enabled us to stay ahead of the curve and to provide the fastest service available in the state, something many would not expect from a local provider."

Internet for Every Business

In addition to our gigabit speeds, Home Telecom offers a variety of packages to suit any business, including 50 Mbps for under \$100 per month.

To address the needs of all our business customers, we've introduced new pricing for larger, dedicated Internet circuits as well. While dedicated circuits were once an option only accessible to the largest businesses, the price has gone down considerably and may be a viable option for smaller businesses where Internet is a critical need.

"Our corporate vision is to be the best and the 'easy to do business with' company to globally connect the communities we serve," says Helmly. "We strive to live our vision by continuing to be the first to introduce the latest and greatest products, such as gigabit Internet, coupled with local customer service. We feel living our vision is how we maintain a 91% customer satisfaction rating with our customers."

Gigabit Internet through Velocity Fiber is now available to all businesses in Velocity Fiber areas. To learn more about bringing super fast Internet speeds to your business, visit business.homesc.com.

Marolina Outdoor Inc.

Clothing America's outdoorsmen in functional, high-quality apparel



Headquartered on Daniel Island in Charleston, South Carolina, Marolina Outdoor Inc. prides itself on creating high-quality clothing designed for the nation's hunters and fishermen. Created with both the seasoned professional and recreational sportsman in mind, the product line represents much more than simply clothing; it represents a lifestyle.

The Huk and Nomad Brands

Marolina manufactures two apparel lines: Huk Performance Fishing, which includes technical fishing gear for fishermen; and Nomad, a technical-based hunting brand. Huk apparel enables fishermen to wear clothing that functions as a piece of gear—from foul-weather rain suits to SPF hoodies, jackets, and board shorts that keep the wearer cool and protected in the sun. But, notes Marketing Director Drew Herma, “Our waterproof button-down polo shirts, with antimicrobial and stain-releasing qualities, are versatile enough to be worn virtually anywhere, even out to dinner.”

The company's newest technical-based hunting brand, Nomad, is designed for big-game enthusiasts, whether hunting in Alaska or relaxing in their own backyards. The brand incorporates innovative technologies, such as the SilverZ scent suppression system, which absorbs and

limits human scent distribution, greatly reducing the amount of scent detectable by prey.

Nomad apparel protects hunters in virtually any environment and provides comfort with expandable gussets to enable wearers to layer garments as needed for various seasons and locations. Herma says, “The Nomad brand gets back to basics with affordable, high-quality products that are not about harvesting big trophy animals, but about feeding our families. It's who we are and part of our lifestyle.”

Regional Participation

Marolina sponsors outdoor venues, working with Bassmaster and the USDA Conservation Technical Assistance program to promote conservation. The company seeks to build not only its apparel business but also the fishing community, by sponsoring local fundraising tournaments and events that support various charities.

In addition, Marolina works with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Foundation as an official sponsor of the Python Challenge, which helps control invasive exotic species in the Everglades. Marolina also supports the National Wild Turkey Federation, which promotes land and game animal management in South Carolina.

Dramatic Growth Expected

Since its inception in 2013, Marolina has been steadily expanding. Its “mastermind” and president, Ben Verner, possesses extensive knowledge of the market and has built the foundation of the Marolina team. In addition to Verner and Herma, the ever-growing staff includes founding partner and Vice President of Sales, Josh Reed, along with an art director and production crew. Herma comments, “We run our business like a family. We’re all very close and work together to reach the same goal. The family vibe comes across to our customers, like talking to one of your best friends or a cousin.”

The tremendous growth of Marolina required a telecom provider that could keep up with the volume of customer service calls and massive website data transfers. Customer service averages 200 to 300 calls a day. Editing and uploading videos for two TV shows requires fast Internet service without delay. Herma notes, “Lightning-fast Internet service is invaluable to our business. It’s our lifeline. To be able to communicate without interruption, everything has to be extremely fast. It’s vital to how well we deliver to our customers and can set us apart from our competition. Home Telecom has been great. Their guys are willing to be there for us after hours. That speaks volumes. Home Telecom’s service is as good as it gets.”

Robert Reimers, Business Service Sales at Home Telecom, notes that the company looks forward to helping Marolina expand its services for future growth. He says, “Marolina is an interesting, fast-growing company with a cool, user-friendly product and a national marketing presence. The company needed a reliable, cost-effective Internet solution that they couldn’t get elsewhere. Their cloud-based services require fast upload speeds, which only Home Telecom could deliver affordably. This solution will allow them to continue to grow at a rapid pace.”

Lightning-fast Internet service is invaluable to our business. It’s our lifeline.”

— DREW HERMA, MARKETING DIRECTOR, MAROLINA OUTDOOR INC.



HUNTING AND FISHING TIPS FROM MAROLINA

In keeping with the “family vibe” at Marolina, the company maintains a blog for each of its brands to pass along friendly hunting and fishing advice to customers. A recent post from the Huk blog (see hukgear.com/blogs/news) offers tips for Great Lakes salmon fishing, such as understanding the difference between various salmon species, sharpening hooks before starting out, and understanding how light impacts productivity. Other Huk blog topics include how to prepare in winter for great fishing in the spring, ice fishing, and interviews with experienced pros.

The Nomad blog (see nomadoutdoor.com/blogs/news) has similar practical, easy-to-read advice, with topics like tips for hunting late season whitetail deer, choosing a rifle, and how to ensure smooth group hunting trips. A recent post about how to stay quiet in a tree stand includes tips like eliminating squeaks and other noises from your stand, laying down carpeting on the floor, and cutting down on noisy gadgets and gear.





Managing Your Online Reputation

What are people saying about your business online?

In business, bigger isn't necessarily better. There are advantages to being small, including the ability to provide service that's truly personal. As both businesses and customers move toward online interactions, this ability can be leveraged even further. As a small business owner or manager, you can easily monitor what customers are saying about you and use the information to provide better service. You can also use social media to foster strong connections that lead to more sales.

On the down side, any negative information appearing online can be harmful to your reputation. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to find out what people are saying about you, and to repair any damaging remarks.

Monitor

First, monitor the Internet for potentially unflattering information about your company. Use online tools to monitor social media sites, especially Twitter and Facebook. For example, you can receive emails when keywords you choose show up on Twitter, or when someone posts a comment on your Facebook page. Also, set up a Google alert for your business name and any product brand names; Google will send you email messages that show your online mentions.

React

If you find negative information posted on another website, ask the owner of the site to remove it. If they refuse, don't waste time trying to force the issue. Instead, create more positive information about yourself in order to push the negative comments down in search rankings, so it's

less likely to be seen. Positive content can be added in the form of new pages on your website, press releases, articles, and posts on other sites. You can also ensure higher search rankings by using search engine optimization (SEO) techniques.

Respond

Within social media sites and other places you can comment (such as blogs), respond to negative comments as soon as possible after they appear. Resist the temptation to reply with anger when someone criticizes your company. Keep the interests of your customers in mind and determine whether a public or private response is more appropriate.

Respond to positive mentions as well. Thank people who compliment your company, and engage them further by asking for an opinion, or letting them know about new product offerings.

Whether positive or negative, look for patterns in customer comments and use them to guide the future direction of your business.

Participate

Actively participate in social media to establish relationships and a reputation as an expert in your field. Posting valuable information, deals, images, or even just entertainment brings you closer to your customers. Remember that strong relationships on social media sites make negative information less likely to be believed.

How to **SAFEGUARD** Your Data

Online backup protects the information that's critical to your business



What is your small business doing to protect your data? Are you burning CDs when you think of it? Storing files on a small network server? Using thumb drives? These backup methods have three major flaws:

1. They are not automated in any way and depend entirely on someone remembering to do the backup.
2. Since they aren't always checked, there's no assurance that the backups are working.
3. Rarely, if ever, are the files stored at an off-site location, so the data is not fully secure or accessible online while away from the office.

Given the importance of your data, an outsourced program for online data backup could be one of the most important investments you make in your

business. According to a recent study by IDC, an independent researcher in information technology, businesses that didn't outsource data backup lost an average of over three times as much money as a result of a disaster incident. The study also found that it typically takes one-third the time for a business to get up and running again after a disaster if backups are done online versus in-house.

Some of the most common reasons for data loss are hardware failure, human error, hardware corruption, theft, and viruses. On top of these risks, businesses must also factor in the potential for natural

disasters such as floods and fires. You can reduce the odds of a data disaster by making plans now to use online data backup and storage.

Home Telecom works with customers to provide the highest assurance that critical business data is backed up and available for restoration at all times. To learn more about how we can help you keep your valuable data safe, call 888-571-5775.

WHO'S MINDING YOUR BUSINESS?

TYLER MULLINAX
Home Integration Wiring Technician

Home Integration Wiring Technician Tyler Mullinax has been part of the Home Telecom team for over eight years. He started with the company in the warehouse as an inventory technician and later transferred to his current position. Previously, he worked as an oil technician at Jiffy Lube, after earning a diploma from Berkeley High School.

Mullinax likes working for Home Telecom because, he says, "It's a locally-owned family business that provides quality service to our customers." In his work, he has a variety of duties related to home technology installations. He comments, "My favorite part of my job is that I'm challenged every day, and I get to keep up with technology as it evolves."

In his spare time, Mullinax bowls in a league. In addition, he spends time traveling to car shows to look at custom vehicles and also has one of his own.





Power the Speed of your Business

Upgrade to Gigabit Internet Speed!

With Gigabit Internet from Home Telecom, your Business can:

- Upload and download large files faster
- Online collaborate/video conference over a high quality connection
- Back-up critical data to the cloud quickly
- Support an influx of devices
- Maintain the security of your network with our FREE Internet Security Software

Call or visit us online to upgrade today!

*All services/speeds not available in all areas. All Internet speeds are "up to" speeds and are not guaranteed. There are many factors that may cause actual speeds to vary that are outside of our control such as equipment used and external network conditions. Some restrictions may apply. Contact your Home Telecom Business Representative for more information.



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