

# BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

## Variety Creates Value Spotlight on the Daniel Island Company



Cover photo provided by the Daniel Island Company.

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# BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

## The pace of business is now measured in Mbps.

To say the Internet has transformed the way we work is an understatement. Think back to the days before your business had an Internet connection. How did you communicate with colleagues? Do research? Market your products and services?

This August issue of *Business Connections* begins with a reminder that **increasing your Internet speed increases productivity**. I'm pleased to announce that making this upgrade can be very affordable. As a limited time offer, Home Telecom is now able to **double your Internet speed for as little as \$10.00 per month**. Speaking of speed, the **social networking site Pinterest** has grown rapidly to become number three behind Facebook and Twitter. On page 4, learn more about Pinterest and how it can be used to connect with customers.

Internet service is, of course, just part of a total communications solution. You also need an **efficient and cost-effective business phone system**, and this topic is explored in the Business Spotlight article on page 6. The **Daniel Island Company** recently switched to a hybrid Voice PBX from ESI and the developer is glad it made the change.

Whether your business needs faster Internet speeds, a new phone system or another productivity-enhancing tool, contact Home Telecom. We'll help you pick up the pace to cover more ground in less time.

Sincerely,

William S. Helmly  
President & COO  
Home Telecom



live life ahead.

# Increase Your Internet Speed to Increase *Productivity*



## *Bandwidth is vital for small business growth and competitiveness*

Is your current Internet speed keeping up with the demands of your employees and customers? Ask yourself these questions:

- Does it take too much time for your staff to do online research or receive large files?
- Are your employees frustrated with the Internet speed at your business?
- Do your customers have to wait on the phone while their account information is loading or transactions are being processed?
- Is your staff unable to effectively use video conferencing for collaboration?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, it may be time to consider increasing the speed of your Internet connection. But, before you explore what a higher bandwidth would do for your business, it's important to understand the terminology.

What exactly is bandwidth? The term refers to how much data you can send through a network or modem connection. Bandwidth is usually measured in bits per second, such as 10 Mbps (10 million bits per second). You can think of bandwidth as a highway with cars traveling on it; the highway is the network connection and the cars are the data. The wider the highway, the more cars can travel on it at one time and the faster they get to their destinations. The same principle applies to computer data—the more bandwidth, the more information that can be transferred within a given amount of time.

Many different businesses can reap rewards by upgrading to a higher-speed Internet connection. This is particularly true for businesses that fit these criteria:

- Conduct business at multiple (two to four) locations
- Leverage the Internet for 60 percent of their business operations or more
- Deploy 16 or more computers, including laptops and desktop machines
- Employ three or more employees

The bottom line is this: an increasing amount of business activity is now done online, and data-intensive applications require faster data speeds. If you want to stay ahead of your competition, you need to be traveling as fast, or faster, than they are. By equipping your business with more bandwidth, your employees can move data more quickly and efficiently, resulting in a better overall experience for your customers.

### **DOUBLE YOUR SPEED for as low as \$10/month**

Here's a brand new deal from Home Telecom: You can double the speed of your Business Internet for as low as \$10 more per month. It's a very fast way to ramp up your productivity and efficiency for a very low price. Hurry! This offer is only good for a limited time! **To learn more details, call Home Telecom at 888-571-5775.**

# Consumers Have a **GROWING** **INTEREST** in *Pinterest*

**P**interest is now the third most popular social networking site, surpassed only by Facebook and Twitter. Focused on visual content, Pinterest allows users to create “boards” where they “pin” images about selected topics. For example, the Food Network’s Pinterest account features boards on categories including healthy recipes and entertaining. Your business could similarly create boards related to the lifestyles and beliefs behind your brand.

It’s a marketing strategy worth considering. According to a pair of studies released in May 2012, Pinterest users outdo Facebook users when it comes to the number of companies they follow and the likelihood of their purchasing an item they see on the site. Data from a joint study between Shop.org, comScore, and the Partnering Group indicates that U.S. online consumers follow an average of 9.3 retail companies on Pinterest, compared



to 6.9 on Facebook. And results from a Steelhouse survey indicate that 59 percent of Pinterest users have purchased an item they saw on the site, compared to 33 percent of Facebook users who have bought an item they saw on their news feed or a friend’s wall.

## Is Your Business a Good Fit?

Some businesses are more obviously suited to using Pinterest than others, specifically those whose offerings are highly visual in nature. Since the majority of Pinterest members are women, the site is particularly a good fit for businesses related to weddings, fashion, art, crafts, cooking, architecture, and graphic design. However, that doesn’t mean you should automatically discount Pinterest if you sell other categories of products or services. You may just need to think outside the box.

## Ideas for Using Pinterest

As with other social media sites, the purpose of Pinterest is not to talk solely about what you sell, but to engage with followers and provide value to them. Some ideas for doing so include:

- Hold contests in which you ask followers to pin photos of themselves using your products.
- Pin new product ideas and asking followers to evaluate them.
- Showcase your company’s personality with photos of employees.
- Show images from your blog posts or newsletter articles.
- Create infographics to explain data or current issues related to your business.

You can add a brief description and URL to each pin.

## Getting Started

You need an invitation to join Pinterest. To get one, ask someone who is already a member, or go to [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) to request an invitation. Then simply follow the instructions at the site to start an account and start pinning.





## Have More Fun, Get More Done

### *Laughter can offer serious benefits to your workplace*

In recent years, more and more companies have begun to recognize the need for a little levity around the office. So much so that many consultants now make a living offering advice on how to infuse humor and fun into the workplace. Why?

***Laughter improves morale, cuts down on employee turnover, reduces conflict, strengthens teamwork, builds loyalty, and fosters creativity.***

The answer is simple. Studies have demonstrated that laughter has positive effects on both our physical and mental health. In fact, laughing enhances the immune system, lowers blood pressure, and even releases natural antidepressants and painkillers in the body. This boost to our systems can result in fewer missed days, less illness, and reduced stress.

But those benefits are just the beginning. Creating an atmosphere that welcomes humor often leads to productivity-boosting effects. Laughter improves morale, cuts down on

employee turnover, reduces conflict, strengthens teamwork, builds loyalty, and fosters creativity.

What's more, laughing at work can help counteract the inevitable boredom that arises out of dull tasks and keeps people attentive during long meetings. Remember recess when you were a kid? Think of workplace humor as the adult equivalent of recess—a way to renew energy and focus. As comedian Milton Berle once said, "Laughter is an instant vacation."

Many employers now say that a good sense of humor is even a key factor when choosing new hires. This trait is seen as reflective of a person's flexibility at work and an ability to build good rapport with colleagues.

With just a little effort, you can make your workplace a little more fun for everyone. So go ahead and email that silly video to employees or share lighthearted messages on Facebook. After all, Americans typically spend more waking hours at work than at home, so it's a good idea to find ways to enjoy it. And with all the benefits of laughter, you may be laughing your way to the bank.



### **TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY USING HUMOR**

While at work, you need to make sure your attempts at humor don't venture into offensive or disruptive territory. Keep these tips in mind:

- **Be self-deprecating.** We all appreciate people who can laugh at themselves from time to time. Don't take yourself too seriously!
- **Find humor in stressful situations.** By pointing out the funny side of a task or project your team is working on, your colleagues will easily relate—and no one will get their feelings hurt.
- **Add humor to the agenda.** Devote the first two or three minutes of each meeting to humor and lighten the conversation before getting down to business.
- **Avoid sarcasm.** Sarcasm may work with your closest friends but in a work environment, it can be misinterpreted as a put-down or a thinly veiled comment on someone's actual work habits or skills.



# The Daniel Island Company

*Variety creates value—whether in mixed-use communities or the features of a hybrid Voice PBX*

**B**ased in Charleston, South Carolina, the Daniel Island Company is an award-winning developer of master planned “lifestyle communities.” Formed in 1997, the company is responsible for the thriving mixed-use community on Daniel Island. Its second community, Carnes Crossroads, is currently under development in Goose Creek.

***We were impressed with the variety of features offered by this VoIP system.”***

— **BILL MCKENZIE**, VICE PRESIDENT, DEVELOPMENT  
THE DANIEL ISLAND COMPANY

Creating these communities requires a team effort between many people—and many phone conversations. When the Daniel Island Company needed to replace their older Mitel PBX phone system, they shopped around and discussed the upgrade with Home Telecom. The choice was a hybrid Voice PBX from ESI.

Bill McKenzie, Vice President, Development, notes, “We were impressed with the variety of features offered by this VoIP system. It’s also a cost-effective solution for us. For example, we can ‘share’ one voice PRI by using the VoIP technology. Instead of having one PRI at each location, we have one PRI at the Real Estate office and connect to it from the Company office via the Internet.”

The many features of this Voice PBX include:

- **Remote IP Capability** – Phones can be plugged into any Internet connection. So when employees travel, it appears to the outside world as if they’re working from the office.
- **Redundancy** – ESI utilizes M3 technology to constantly backup all data including recordings, system programming, speed dial numbers, and voice mail messages.
- **Mobile Messaging** – This provides the ability to have a voice mail message recorded on a desk extension to be forwarded as a .wav file to an email inbox.

Installation took place in June 2012. Says McKenzie, “It went very smoothly and the system is working well. There is definitely a learning curve in terms of using all of the features, but the basic ones have been very easy to master. And since Home Telecom is local, help is easily accessible whenever we need it.”

*For cost-efficient communications solutions for your business, call a Home Telecom Business Sales Representative today at 888-571-5775.*



*Bill McKenzie talks business at the Daniel Island Company.*

## WHO’S MINDING YOUR BUSINESS?

**DANIELA MANGINI** Residential Sales Representative

Daniela Mangini brought several years of telecommunications sales and management with her when she started at Home Telecom in September 2010 as a Customer Service Representative in the Daniel Island office. A year later, she became Residential Sales Representative.

Mangini describes her position this way, “My first priority is to cultivate relationships with our builders and our customers. Although I may work in the business office

between 8am and 5pm, I never leave my work there. My customers and agents can call me any time, and I often work Saturdays so I’m in the field as much as possible. I meet with agents within the new sub-divisions being built in Moncks Corner, Goose Creek, Summerville, Huger, and along Clements Ferry Road on Daniel Island.”

She adds, “The most rewarding aspect of my job is being able to show the customer how valuable Home Telecom is due to the level of our technology and our people. I also enjoy the opportunity to go out into these communities, see the growth and development, and meet with customers face-to-face.”



# How Does Your Business Look to **Customers?**

*Use this checklist to spot and correct common mistakes*



**T**he physical appearance of your business speaks volumes and contributes to customer impressions. So it's important to look around through the eyes of your customers. What do they see when driving up to your building? When walking through the front door?

The checklist below will help you identify areas that need attention in order for your business to project a more positive image.

## Outside Your Business

- ✔ Are there letters missing in your signage or burnt out bulbs that cause only part of your business name to be visible? Make sure your signage is legible at all times.
- ✔ Is everything clean and attractive near the entrance to your business? Or are there cigarette butts on the sidewalk and weeds around the bushes? You want the first impression that customers have to be a good one.
- ✔ If your business has store windows, do they feature attractive merchandise displays that are changed regularly? Don't make the mistake of using store windows to simply stock shelves of merchandise; it's not appealing.

## Inside Your Store or Office

- ✔ Does your store or office need a new coat of paint? Is the carpet dirty or torn? Do the floors have broken or missing tiles? If your interior looks tired or poorly maintained, it reflects negatively on your business. Décor matters, so pay attention to it. You may even want to research the physiology of color when choosing new paint and flooring. For example, red makes people hungry and blue is considered relaxing.
- ✔ Do your bathrooms leave something to be desired? If you have public facilities, they need to be kept sparkling clean at all times. Some customers will draw conclusions about your overall level of quality based on the condition of the bathrooms.
- ✔ Is your lighting too low? If you own a retail store, it's imperative that lighting be bright enough so the customers can easily view the merchandise.
- ✔ Does your office look cluttered? Think about how customers feel if they can't find a place to sit because all the chairs are piled high with papers. Keep your office looking organized and welcoming to visitors.

**Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.**

Take the time to critically evaluate the inside and outside of your business on a regular basis; you may want to enlist the help of friends and family members to give you their honest opinions as well. While you're at it, evaluate how your business looks online as well—your website, Facebook page, and so on. After all, your bottom line may look better if your business looks better.



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