eLab News

The Broadband eLaboratory Newsletter - March 2004

website: www.broadbandelaboratory.co.uk   E-mail: info@broadbandelaboratory.co.uk

---

In this month's issue:

- eLaboratory survey carried out - results and analysis are revealed
- Positive reaction could result in the pilot project being turned into something more permanent

eLab booking and information line:

Tel: 01254 828269

eLab News:

is produced by
Instant Search Ltd.
4 George Street
Whalley
Lancashire
BB7 9TH

Tel: 01254 822288

The eLaboratory demonstrations – delegates have their say

This month's eLab News is given over to analysis of a market research survey we carried out during February. We invited everyone who has visited the Whalley site to give us their feedback on the sessions they attended, and we were absolutely delighted at the response we received.

86% of those contacted took part in the survey – a very high percentage for an exercise of this nature, and an indication of how enthusiastic people are about the project. The survey produced some fascinating results, and we've summarised the main points and issues raised in this edition of the newsletter.
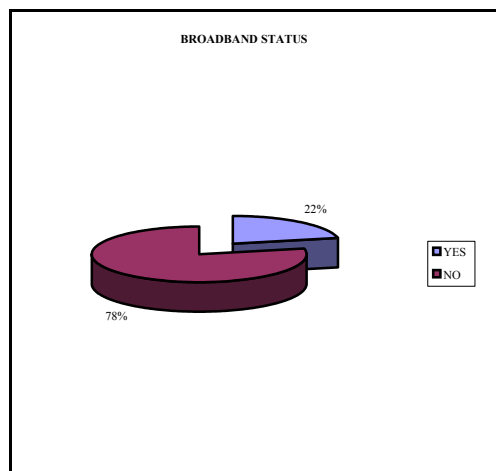
The survey results - main headlines:

- 78% of visitors had no prior experience of broadband
- Since visiting, 40% of those people have had broadband installed in their business
- 60% of all people using broadband believe it has increased business productivity by an average of 15%
- Only 10% of people without broadband were not convinced that it could benefit their business
- 33% of visitors highlighted the videoconferencing demonstration as the most interesting topic

BROADBAND STATUS

22%

78%

YES
NO

Just one in five visitors were already using broadband at their place of work

Summary and conclusions

So what have we proved from all this? Project Director Anthony Capstick believes that the results are encouraging, and is optimistic about the future of the project. "One of the reasons for the project's success is that it was delivered by a working business for the benefit of other businesses, and that is reflected in the positive results that we have achieved through this independent analysis carried out by David Murray Associates", he said.

"We've shown that by giving business people the chance to see the benefits of broadband, many will follow up their initial interest by having it installed. However, the timescale for the project has proved to be too tight – we've not been able to use the e-Lab as much as we hoped as a true "proof of concept" site, helping businesses to develop their own broadband applications, which was part of the original intention".

He added: "The plan now is to roll out a licensed system on a franchise-type basis. If SME's in other regions embrace the concept of installing broadband and adopting new business processes and procedures, the SME sector will undoubtedly become more competitive in the longer term".

Delegates move to install broadband after sessions

Out of the total number of people who have attended a demonstration at the Whalley site, four in five had never seen a broadband installation in action before their visit. However, after seeing demonstrations of the different applications of broadband during the sessions, 40% of these people have had broadband installed in their businesses, and a further 21% have stated they are planning an installation in the near future – a very high take up in a relatively short space of time. It appears that attending a demonstration not only highlighted the benefits of broadband within businesses, but also prompted delegates to move forward with their own plans to install broadband.

One of the major aims of the eLaboratory project has always been to increase awareness of the benefits of broadband applications in business, and the high take up after attending a session would indicate that we have been successful in doing so.

Broadband improves business productivity

One of the key selling points of any project is the demonstration of cost savings through improved employee productivity, and our research uncovered an important statistic. Out of the people we spoke to, 36% of them believed that the installation of broadband has resulted in an average increase in productivity of around 15% within their businesses.

The significance of this should not be understated. These are the views of individuals who in many instances are operating in a hands-on role within small businesses, and are therefore well placed to make a judgement on the efficiencies being delivered. What's more, there is good reason to assume that these findings are scalable – the bigger the business, the bigger the efficiencies. It's a key point, and an important one to consider when analysing the benefits that the installation of broadband can bring.

I'm sold on the benefits - but how much will it cost?

As stated previously, feedback on the sessions has been very positive, but one area was highlighted where attendees felt the information given was not as specific as they had hoped. 33% of people felt that they were not given enough information relating to the costs involved in installing and running a broadband connection, and 27% felt that they did not have enough information on the cost savings that could be achieved through using broadband.

This is obviously something we need to look at, but there are difficulties involved in giving exact figures. Expenditure on equipment, lines, and ISP costs will vary from business to business depending on requirements, and we were concerned that quoting specific figures could be misleading. None the less, now that this point has been raised, we will aim to deal with it in future sessions.

Videoconferencing delivers the "wow" factor!

The most popular feature of the sessions was the demonstration of video conferencing, with 32% of people saying that it was the subject that interested them most during the visit.

Strangely, although it generated the most interest, the majority of people said that videoconferencing was not a facility that they saw as being important to their business. However, this part of the demonstration is one of the most visible examples of how a broadband connection can aid business communications, and as such it was always likely to generate a high level of interest among the delegates who attended sessions.

A videoconferencing demonstration in progress at the eLaboratory site located within the Chamber of Commerce offices in Accrington