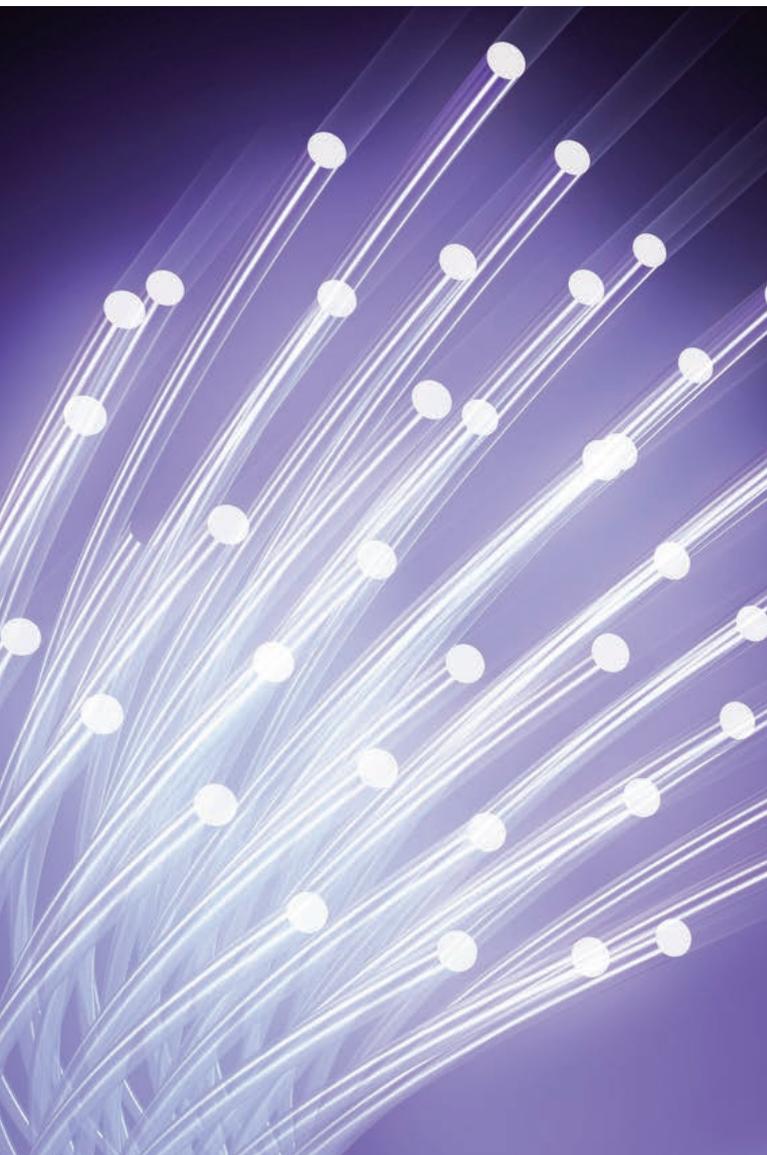




Transforming client services with superfast broadband



“We’re the **if Agency** - an integrated creative agency based in South Manchester, that delivers effective online and offline campaigns for retail, leisure, finance and other business clients across the UK.”

www.ifagency.co.uk



Brian Rees, chairman of the if Agency, Manchester, explains how superfast fibre broadband services have changed the way the award-winning agency works and its relationship with its clients.

“We like to keep our working processes simple and clear. Once we have completed our initial research, we do the thinking, come up with raw creative ideas, and agree a strategy. From that moment, the speed and quality of our outputs to clients, suppliers and media owners depend on digital networking. So too does our business’ success.

As an agency, we take an innovative approach and our needs vary hugely from project to project. We might send a conceptual presentation to initiate proposals, or the latest versions of TV commercials or digital artwork for an integrated press advertising campaign. All these outputs are carried online, so that’s where superfast is vital – our stock-in-trade is high megabyte volume data, and fast means first!

Getting on the superfast track

When we set up six years ago, work timescales were determined by the absence of technology! We quickly embraced ‘first generation’ broadband with ADSL that ran at 5Mbps downstream and 800Kbps upstream. This helped but it wasn’t a full answer. Large files still couldn’t be transferred efficiently and many chunky pieces of artwork were biked up and down motorways, adding risk, time and cost to jobs.

We understood that we needed better connections to compete successfully against nationally-networked agencies, and to work more effectively with our blue-chip clients - larger retailers and home shopping giants.

Like many SMEs, we don't have a full-time IT team, but unlike others we use an IT consultant to guide and advise us on developments and new opportunities. Our consultant, Getfirst, outlined the benefits we could gain from fibre broadband with a superfast connection. We found that BT was offering its new BT Infinity services in the region and that our office was very close to one of the first areas to be enabled.

Making the difference

We responded immediately to BT's customer marketing, it really was a heaven-sent opportunity to move to far higher speeds and a vastly improved level of customer service. After two days of installation work in November 2010, we have never looked back.

Many of our newer clients have only ever dealt with us since we adopted superfast services, so have no 'bad old days' to compare with. They are happy if we meet the needs they have today, and superfast broadband ensures we always do that. Our established clients appreciate the dramatic improvements.

Using fibre connections, we are more responsive than ever, and can now zap 45 Mbps downstream and about 13 Mbps up. Superfast broadband has boosted the performance of every single element of our core IT function - email, internet access, file transfer, remote control, virtual private network (VPN), automatic online back-up all run faster.

We worried about the cost and possible inconvenience, but this game-changing improvement in the service we can offer has not cost us a premium, and we didn't suffer any disruption to our business. The if Agency is faster and more efficient than ever, and all our customers and suppliers appreciate it.



Reaching further with superfast services

We know that there is more we can do to improve the ways we work and the range of client services we offer. We understand that our connections are the platform for our continuing success. We are looking at the impact of 4G and how this will bring our server in reach of our smartphones and tablets. We're looking at home-office and other remote working possibilities, and at making even greater use of virtual meetings and webinars.

For the future, we are examining whether Cloud Computing will give us greater flexibility as we grow, and a better ROI for our infrastructure investment. We always keep a close eye on BT's plans and developments so we're best positioned to take advantage of the latest technologies in our ever-changing and furiously competitive business."

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