OUR SOLUTIONS TIMELINE

Dial a Nerd

**INTERNET**

1. CABLED INFRASTRUCTURE

Whether it is highly complex or simple and straightforward, every IT solution is only as good as the CABLES it operates on. Indeed, much like a tarred road versus a shoddy dirt track, 'traffic' - whether data or vehicular - needs a good backbone or roadway to travel on and through.
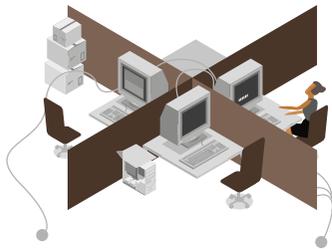
3. CONNECTIVITY

Johannesburg is now a hub of connectivity, with various options available to the business owner. These options include fibre, LTE/3G, wireless, microwave links VDSL and ADSL.

5. MANAGED WIRELESS

Unlike the simple wireless access points in homes or small businesses, there are enterprise solutions (without the enterprise cost) that allow for multiple users to connect to the same or nearby access points. They can connect without "dropped" signal issues as staff and/or clients move around the environment.

2. FIREWALL: NETWORK & INTERNET SECURITY HARDWARE

Why it's no longer simply the network "policeman"

Today's firewall solutions offer a lot more in terms of network management, including: prioritisation of access for specific users, limiting browsing rights and capabilities, and accurate reports at month end of connectivity usage.

ICT BOARD

4. INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND SOFTWARE

From accounting packages to Resource Management Software (RMS) and Customer Relations Management (CRM), we have all the right partnerships in place to offer advice, training and implementation around key software solutions.

OUR SOLUTIONS TIMELINE

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6. VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP)

Expensive (Telkom based) traditional phones systems are fast being replaced by sophisticated VOIP systems. Today's new VoIP systems (unlike what was available in 2010) are reliable, affordable and provide all the functionalities of a traditional phone system (and more).

8. THE QUESTION OF THE CLOUD

A server in an air-conditioned room, or a "cloud" server with a subscription cost? There are pros and cons to both, and your organization will likely have a range of requirements. You may also be constrained by other variables such as security, connectivity and data usage. We will advise the best solution based on your unique requirements, implement it, train the users, and support the school into the future.

9. CCTV

In previous years, the footage gained from these devices was grainy and almost unusable. However, with new solutions on offer, this solution can now be installed step by step (as budgets allow) and plugged into your network. It can be controlled by the same software, managed by databases and accessed remotely by management, external security companies or even staff.

10. CONTRACTED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR IT SUPPORT

At Dial a Nerd, we are able to offer any technical support relationship to match any budget: from a technician visiting once a month for 4 hours on the first Monday, to a fully outsourced model (someone who never leaves your premises).

7. MOBILE COMPUTING SOLUTIONS

At Dial a Nerd, we can help you to better understand what brand/product to choose. We can guide you around elements such as the "failure rates" of a particular product, the current reliability of after sales support and "in country" stock levels in the event of device failure.

CABLED INFRASTRUCTURE

EVERY ROBUST IT SOLUTION STARTS HERE...

WHETHER IT IS HIGHLY COMPLEX OR SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD, EVERY IT SOLUTION IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE CABLES IT OPERATES ON. INDEED, MUCH LIKE A TARRED ROAD VERSUS A SHODDY DIRT TRACK, 'TRAFFIC' - WHETHER DATA OR VEHICULAR - NEEDS A GOOD BACKBONE OR ROADWAY TO TRAVEL ON AND THROUGH.
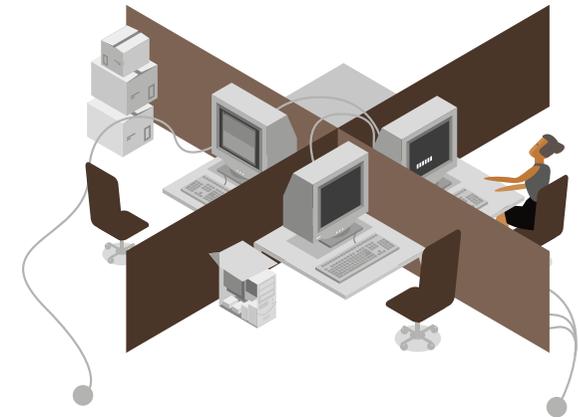
Without this sturdy backbone/roadway, support requirements are escalated, networks become slower and connectivity costs increase. There is also a greater risk of corrupted data, malfunctioning IT solutions and disappearing print jobs.

DEMYSTIFYING NETWORK TRAFFIC:

Network traffic is made up of "packets" of data that are sent and received from devices within an environment. These packets - ranging in size from Bits, Bytes, Kilobytes and Megabytes - are sent and received through your network and require a functional and "clean" network to move through.

Beyond the physical cabling of your network, we also identify old hardware in the form of switches and routers, and assess how these elements contribute to the overall stability of the network.

These devices are constantly being improved upon and becoming more sophisticated. Yet very often, they are the last elements to be noticed or assessed within a business.

This is problematic, because outdated or old networking infrastructure can severely impact your business.

For example:

- Multiple switches (connected in series) slows the network down considerably and introduces multiple points of potential failure thus leading to an increase in diagnostic process of any IT support person thus resulting in an increase in cost to the business.

- Older devices usually have ports that have been damaged due to electrical surges and as they are old technology they simply transfer your data slower than what is possible with newer technology.

- Messy and damaged cables will almost certainly lead to loss of quality on the traffic itself as packets will be lost (resulting in dropped connections to a server or another machine on the network, lack of network response, "disappearing network drives" that staff use to backup etc).

FIREWALL

NETWORK & INTERNET SECURITY HARDWARE

WHY IT'S NO LONGER SIMPLY THE NETWORK "POLICEMAN"

TODAY'S FIREWALL SOLUTIONS OFFER A LOT MORE IN TERMS OF NETWORK MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING: PRIORITISATION OF ACCESS FOR SPECIFIC USERS, LIMITING BROWSING RIGHTS AND CAPABILITIES, AND ACCURATE REPORTS AT MONTH END OF CONNECTIVITY USAGE.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT
Separate the network into different zones to secure your server environment – thus allowing for different divisions to operate separately and to properly understand, isolate and diagnose the network traffic.

PRIORITY TRAFFIC
The device can be set to allow specific users and/or programs (like Pastel) to have priority on their traffic and utilisation of both the network (and Internet). This is a critical requirement when you have an accounting department accessing an offsite accounting / payroll / online banking / VOIP phone system server, any cloud based solutions or business critical applications.

LIMITED BROWSING
Browsing can be fine-tuned to allow different groups of users the right amount of access for your business, and to prevent other users from browsing certain sites that are known to carry viruses.

ACCURATE REPORTS
Business owners can gain a comprehensive view of bandwidth use in the office, and see where certain users are browsing (specific sites are listed).

LOAD BALANCING AND FAIL-OVER
With two Internet connections (one more expensive and faster than the other), a firewall will allow for the management of those lines in two specific manners:

- Load balancing will allow for specific traffic to utilise a specific line, for example: your accounts department uses one line and the company browses on the other.

- Fail-over is the function of the device automatically "failing over" to the secondary line in the event of the first dropping or losing connectivity. This is a critical requirement for a business that must remain connected at all times.

INTRUSION PREVENTION
A good firewall is increasingly critical to protect your data, devices and systems from deliberate outside attack - either from an individual or from malicious software.

CONNECTIVITY

SELECTING THE RIGHT OPTION.

INTERNET

JOHANNESBURG IS NOW A HUB OF CONNECTIVITY, WITH VARIOUS OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE BUSINESS OWNER. THESE OPTIONS INCLUDE FIBRE, LTE/3G, WIRELESS, MICROWAVE LINKS VDSL AND ADSL.

While these solutions might not necessarily be cheaper, they are 10 to 100 times faster than what many businesses have become accustomed to. At Dial a Nerd, we can help you to understand the options and choose the most cost effective and functional solution for your specific business.

We have access to all the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and can assist as a reseller, or simply point you in the right direction. We can provide more options, and ultimately ensure that you have a fast and reliable connection. In a highly competitive market place, it is very valuable for businesses to source advice and guidance from a third party – and particularly one with insight into the various ISPs.
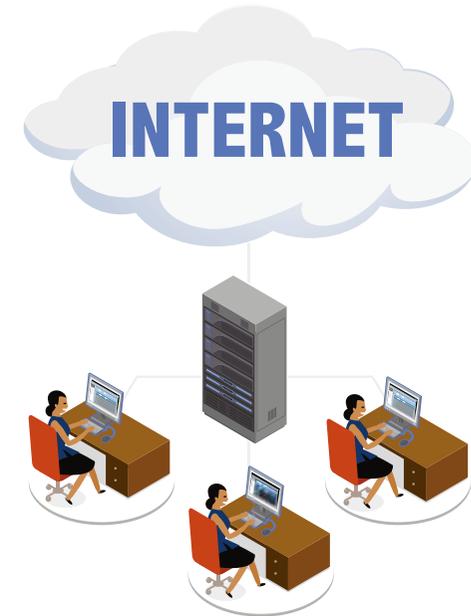
For example, if you have had your current Internet connection for more than ONE YEAR, it is very possible you may be paying too much – or can get a much faster and more reliable connection for a similar price.

In the past 12 months alone, we have seen a huge increase in connectivity options being made available to our customers. With this increase, prices have naturally decreased. However, not all connection types/options are of equal value and quality.

INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND SOFTWARE

ENSURING YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR…

FROM ACCOUNTING PACKAGES TO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE (RMS) AND CUSTOMER RELATIONS MANAGEMENT (CRM), WE HAVE ALL THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIPS IN PLACE TO OFFER ADVICE, TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION AROUND KEY SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS.

When choosing a new software solution, we can provide tailored advice. Having supported hundreds of small business customers in their use of popular software solutions, we bring years of experience and expertise to the task.

FIRST LINE SUPPORT:

As your support company, we would offer first line support for the various software packages. This saves you the high cost associated with getting an onsite support person from the software provider, or having to spend hours on a phone talking to customer support. We can communicate your environment and issue clearly to the software provider, and ensure their solution doesn't compromise other aspects of your business.

At Dial a Nerd, we are adept at diagnosing problems with business tools. We check, first and foremost, that there are not any issues with hardware before shifting the focus to software solutions. This approach decreases downtime to hours, instead of days.
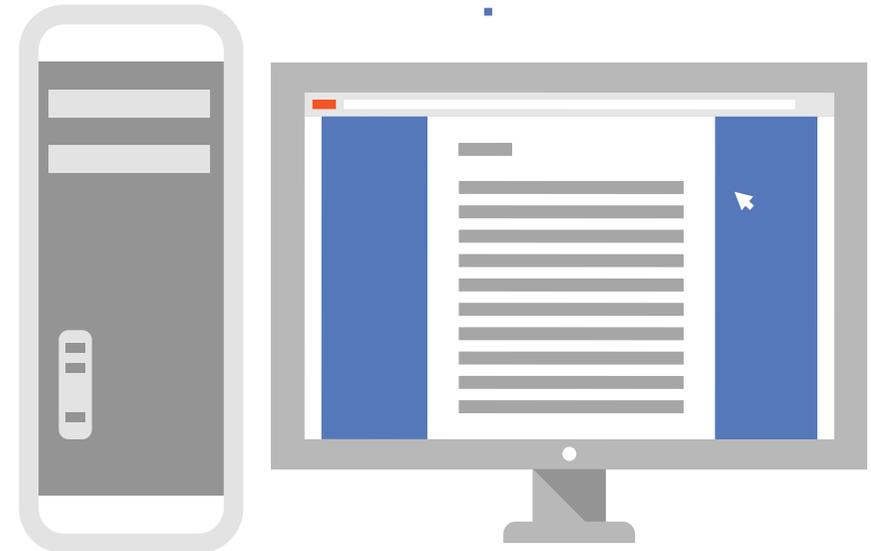
MANAGED WIRELESS

DON'T LET THE SIGNAL DROP YOU.

UNLIKE THE SIMPLE WIRELESS ACCESS POINTS IN HOMES OR SMALL BUSINESSES, THERE ARE ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS (WITHOUT THE ENTERPRISE COST) THAT ALLOW FOR MULTIPLE USERS TO CONNECT TO THE SAME OR NEARBY ACCESS POINTS. THEY CAN CONNECT WITHOUT "DROPPED" SIGNAL ISSUES AS STAFF AND/OR CLIENTS MOVE AROUND THE ENVIRONMENT.

At Dial a Nerd, we have implemented solutions of up to 50 access points on one network, allowing for uninterrupted connectivity for as many as 2000 individual devices.

Ideally, each device needs to 'understand' the traffic that it is managing: where it is coming from and where it is going; and in addition, also understand its limitations.

Consumer Wireless Access Points do not have this ability. They essentially broadcast the network to all and sundry, and receive traffic back from anything that is connected. This is not an intelligent system, and leads to too many users on a single access point, therefore slowing down the network…

If you have experienced the irritation of paying for a fast Internet connection, yet constantly struggle with slow speeds and dropped signals when connected wirelessly, then you probably need to look at a managed wireless environment.

VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP)

CONTROL YOUR COSTS & MANAGE VOICE OVER YOUR DATA LINE

EXPENSIVE (TELKOM BASED) TRADITIONAL PHONES SYSTEMS ARE FAST BEING REPLACED BY SOPHISTICATED VOIP SYSTEMS. TODAY'S NEW VOIP SYSTEMS (UNLIKE WHAT WAS AVAILABLE IN 2010) ARE RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE AND PROVIDE ALL THE FUNCTIONALITIES OF A TRADITIONAL PHONE SYSTEM (AND MORE).

However, VOIP does not cut down on costs that significantly: what you save per phone call you will need to spend on connectivity. VOIP simply cannot work well on copper-based connectivity and contended or "shared" solutions.

That said, key benefits include:

- VOIP systems use your existing network infrastructure (data cabling), thus saving on implementation costs.

- You can save money on rental costs involved with Telkom lines as well as expensive call costs. You will get a very competitive per minute cost, and inter-branch costs can be eliminated completely. Depending on the options chosen (and very importantly, on connectivity) you will not even have to buy an office-based PABX or server for the phones. These can be hosted in the cloud.

Depending on your requirements and the solution implemented, you can keep a few of your old Telkom analogue lines (as a backup) or we could assist in installing a failover Internet connection to ensure your phones are always working.

MOBILE COMPUTING SOLUTIONS

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS NEED?

AT DIAL A NERD, WE CAN HELP YOU TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT BRAND/ PRODUCT TO CHOOSE. WE CAN GUIDE YOU AROUND ELEMENTS SUCH AS THE "FAILURE RATES" OF A PARTICULAR PRODUCT, THE CURRENT RELIABILITY OF AFTER SALES SUPPORT AND "IN COUNTRY" STOCK LEVELS IN THE EVENT OF DEVICE FAILURE.

For example, here are some factors to consider when choosing devices for your environment:

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE (BYOD):
We can assist companies who want to implement BYOD and advise on the risks of this, as well as how to implement it and then manage it going forward. Incorrect management by employees, for one, could lead to malware penetrating the network.

VIRTUAL ACCESS:
A Virtual Private Network (VPN) allows for remote connectivity to the onsite or remote server via multiple devices. With modern day mobile computing, the challenge is servicing all these devices and ensuring your data is always safe. Security is no longer just a choice of what Anti-Virus you are using, but is now a conversation that needs to involve the actual hardware it runs on, software on those devices, policies, etc…
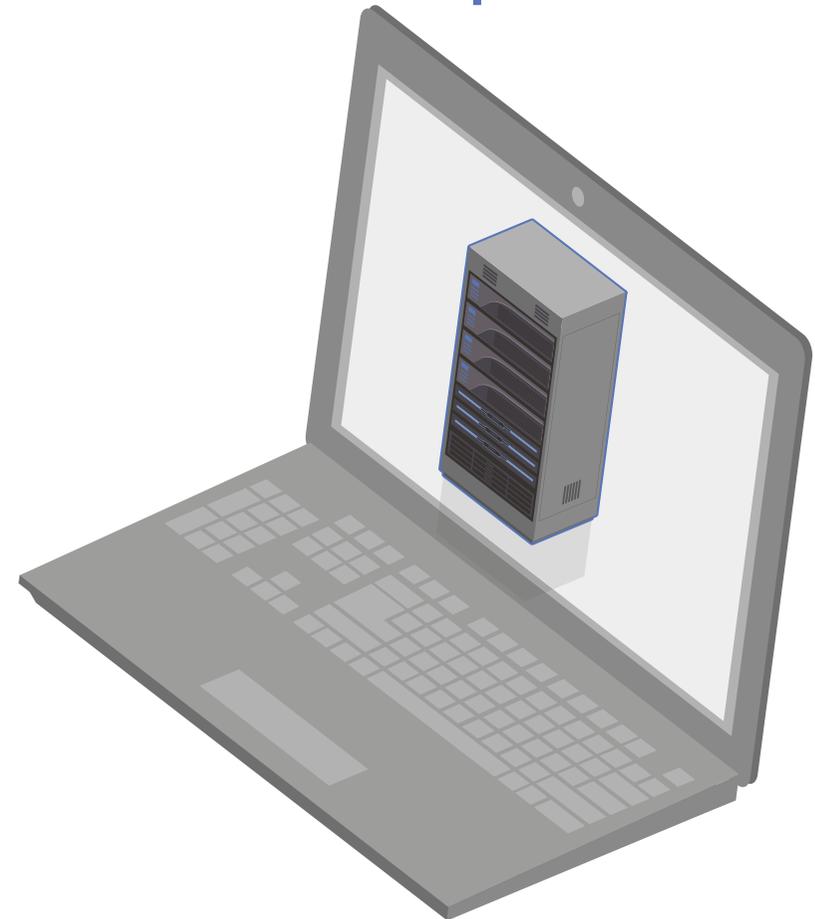
THE QUESTION OF THE CLOUD

WITH CONSTANTLY DECREASING PRICES IN CONNECTIVITY THAT ARE ALMOST PROPORTIONAL TO AN INCREASE IN ITS CAPACITY, IT IS INEVITABLE THAT MORE IT, DATA AND EVEN INFRASTRUCTURE MOVE TO THE CLOUD.
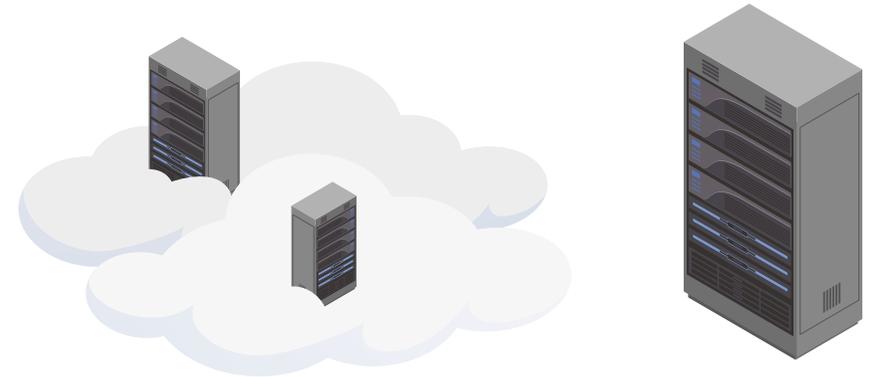
Essentially, 'moving to the cloud' means:

- Less downtime, as data centres (where servers are located) have uninterrupted power.

- Less support hours, as you no longer need your IT guy (or Nerd) to come to your office as often to ensure the server is backing up and doing its job.

- Less risk!

Cloud solutions (when looked at holistically) are usually cheaper than onsite servers. However, you cannot escape the necessity of at least one small entry-level onsite server depending on your company's requirements remaining in your office.

Usually, this single server is your existing server - and as its load and importance is reduced, its lasts much longer than normal.

The common misconception around moving to the cloud is that your data is less secure than an "on premise" (in office) server. This is simply not the case. We can assist you in selecting safe and secure products and service providers, and to configure systems in such a way as to ensure the safety of your data at all times.

It must be noted that there are occasions when an on-site server still makes sense, and in specific industries it is actually a legal requirement. Due to years of experience in almost ALL industries in the local SME space, Dial a Nerd is qualified to outline the benefits of either solution. We can also advise as to how and where your organisation can employ BOTH models to stay ahead of the curve.

CCTV

SAFETY AND SECURITY

IN PREVIOUS YEARS, THE FOOTAGE GAINED FROM THESE DEVICES WAS GRAINY AND ALMOST UNUSABLE. HOWEVER, WITH NEW SOLUTIONS ON OFFER, THIS SOLUTION CAN NOW BE INSTALLED STEP BY STEP (AS BUDGETS ALLOW) AND PLUGGED INTO YOUR NETWORK. IT CAN BE CONTROLLED BY THE SAME SOFTWARE, MANAGED BY DATABASES AND ACCESSED REMOTELY BY MANAGEMENT, EXTERNAL SECURITY COMPANIES OR EVEN STAFF.
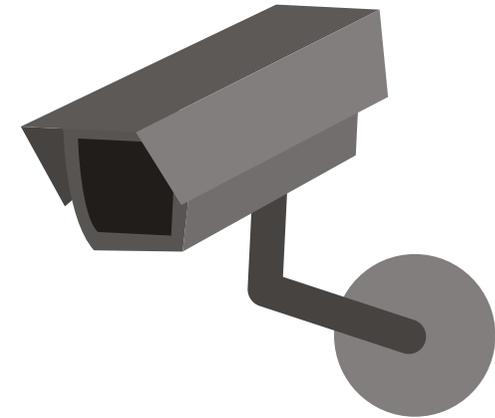
When selecting IP cameras, devices and software, various factors need to be taken into consideration.

For example, do you want CCTV to simply monitor the workplace or do you want a system that can identify people when something goes missing? Should the system contain motion detection to record when someone is in the area only? Can you pick up the details of someone's face when you play back your footage?

IP cameras are fast replacing the old analogue cameras due to better picture quality, and the ability to remotely monitor and control devices via sophisticated software. Cameras can now be an extension of your existing computer network and accessed remotely from smartphones, tablets and laptops.

In the past, expanding your camera system meant running a new cable, installing power for it and having to buy a bigger (or second) Digital Video Recorder. Today, new technology called NVR (Network Video Recorders) makes adding more IP cameras as simple as adding another camera to the network wherever you have an existing cable.

CONTRACTED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR IT SUPPORT

YOUR CUSTOMISED IT 'INSURANCE POLICY'

AT DIAL A NERD, WE ARE ABLE TO OFFER ANY TECHNICAL SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP TO MATCH ANY BUDGET: FROM A TECHNICIAN VISITING ONCE A MONTH FOR 4 HOURS ON THE FIRST MONDAY, TO A FULLY OUTSOURCED MODEL (SOMEONE WHO NEVER LEAVES YOUR PREMISES).

We can support your business IT in its entirety, or simply manage large projects on a piecemeal basis.

Our support contracts include monitoring and preventative maintenance software to ensure your environment is kept running smoothly. Our comprehensive monitoring system, for example, checks your backups and alerts us if the backups have started to fail. Over and above this, it informs us of Anti-Virus issues, hard drive capacity, network connectivity and dramatically shortens diagnostic time.

We have a dedicated remote support team of qualified technicians. When you call them, they can immediately identify (using advanced software) if your computer is connected on the network and if there is anything actually wrong with the hardware. If they cannot assist you in real time for any reason, they can book a technician to immediately go out to site to fix the issue.

Dial a Nerd is a Managed Services Provider – we can identify and solve your IT headaches quickly and efficiently, allowing you to get back to doing business.