

Free wireless internet connectivity is bringing in the customers for Benugo.

<b>Sector</b>	Food and Catering
<b>No. of employees</b>	150
<b>Technologies</b>	WiFi Lan, Broadband
<b>Location</b>	London
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.benugo.com">www.benugo.com</a> <a href="http://www.broadscape.net">www.broadscape.net</a>



Taking its name from co-founders Ben and Hugo Warner, Benugo cafés opened for business in 1998. They offered customers a new style of café with ‘pizzazz’, in an environment where people could relax and enjoy their food. With 11 café shops in and around London, 150 staff employed throughout the business and annual revenues of over £6m, Benugo has proved to be a big hit with customers. “At Benugo we know that the customer always has a choice,” says Tim Parfitt, Finance Director, “We want Benugo to be that choice as often as possible.”

From its inception, technology has played an integral part in the way

Benugo operates. An internal WiFi and wired LAN at Head Office provides a computer network which is linked to the internet. All external sites (the cafés) have ADSL connections to the internet and to the central network at Head Office. This means that communication between the various sites is quick and easy. It also means that stock information can be kept up-to-date. “Timely effective communication is crucial for managing the business,” says Tim. “Having up-to-the-minute information on my laptop most of the day means I have instant access to information that keeps my finger on the pulse.”

But in today's market margins are low and competition is fierce. Business survival depends on sustaining profitability and maintaining customer satisfaction. This is why Tim was intrigued by the proposition from technology solutions provider, Broadscape. The proposal was to provide Benugo's customers with high speed internet access over a Wireless LAN with a WiFi access point. This would effectively mean that a customer could come into a Benugo's café, open up their laptop and have instant access to the internet without having to plug in any cables. Benugo trialled the idea in two of their cafés. They offered wireless internet connections free of charge as long as customers spent £2 or over on food or coffee for every 30 minutes of use. A short flyer tells customers how to set up the WiFi access on their laptop and within minutes they're online.

Broadscape's installation also included Bluetooth which allowed compatible PDAs to connect to the internet as well. The innovative aspect of the system is that customers are not charged directly for internet access. Which in turn means that there are no billing issues and nothing complicated to consider with billing updates.

So far the trial has been successful – more customers have been attracted into the shops and are consuming more products in order to stay online. Staff are pleased too as they are able to sell more without having to undergo extensive training. The total set up cost was £1,500, with DSL lines installed in the two trial cafés for internet connectivity through WiFi access. Although technically feasible to use the primary ADSL line, they chose to use a second line for security and peace of mind.

Wireless technology also allows management instant access to the latest information as they move around different locations. "I visit different locations and use my laptop to keep up to date with e-mail and business," says Tim. "A rough calculation suggests we save at least 500 man hours a year which equates to about a £25,000 saving." The success has been such that Benugo is now planning to add further cafés with WiFi access.

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TIM PARFITT – FINANCE DIRECTOR

