



## Broadband Improves Work-Life Balance and Cuts Costs at Praktis Solutions

Mike Horne is sure that "having broadband at home has given me an extra week of family time each month. I now have to travel much less frequently to visit clients, or meet with colleagues." The Senior Database Analyst with Warrington-based Oracle Certified Partner, Praktis Solutions, is benefiting from the company's decision to install broadband in the homes of all its consultants.

Mike gives the example of a Birmingham client who, prior to his home broadband connection, he visited "2-4 times a month to supervise upgrades and other technical tasks. But in the six months since it was put in I've visited only twice, and that was for meetings."

### **Remote access creates customer benefits**

The elimination of site visits is partly due to the higher connection speeds - so that files can be quickly transferred between Praktis and its customers, and within the company. Previously, files that were too large to transfer electronically had to be posted. Praktis Account Director Dave Manley also highlights the benefits of more secure connections. "Broadband makes it easier to have secure access to customers networks. We can then troubleshoot, upgrade, or make other changes to their Oracle installations by remote access. All of this means



*Dave Manley working from his home office in Northwich*

*"It's easier for us to support clients remotely - and therefore to seek contracts outside the region"*

### **Key Facts**

- **Hotdesking, conferencing and working from home mean that the costs of a central office can be avoided**
- **Consultants have a better work-life balance and clients get a better service**
- **Broadband has a payback of just weeks.**



## ***“The payback on the investment was just a few weeks”***

that it's easier for us to support clients remotely - and therefore to seek contracts outside the region.”

Home broadband has cut Praktis Solutions' phone bills too by enabling free Internet telephony. It has also allowed greater use of web conferencing, which allows users to combine audio conferencing with simultaneous display of any documents, Powerpoint presentations or files which are being discussed.

### **Office costs are greatly reduced**

These changes have allowed Praktis to eliminate its office at the xPedia building (a hi-tech incubation centre established in 2002 by Warrington 2000, with a grant from the Northwest Regional Development Agency). The office has been replaced by a rented 'hotdesk' in the same building.

Dave Manley explains that “consultants now come into the office much less, so it's mainly me acting as a central hub. Not only is an office a luxury for what's really a virtual company, it's also a more lonely - and less satisfying - workplace than the more social space of the hotdesking area. As we've retained the same postal address and telephone number, and use the same meeting rooms as before, customers don't even know that there's been a change.”

xPedia Managing Director Carsten Kressel observes that the transition is “just what incubation centres like ours aim to achieve. We provide lots of support when companies are young, but when they're strong enough to be independent, help them to fly the nest.”

### **£4800 annual cost savings give broadband a payback of weeks**

Overall, Dave Manley believes that “in the six months since all of our consultants got home broadband we saved around £2,400 in travel, telephone and office costs. The payback on the investment was just a few weeks. As our markets are very competitive the savings make a significant difference to profits. And when we pitch for local or even regional business we're now able to absorb the much lower level of travel costs rather than pass them onto the client. This makes us much more competitive with companies from outside the region, and has already been a factor in winning some local authority tenders.”

### **Further Information**

The Northwest Regional Development Agency wants the region's people and businesses to benefit from the new opportunities created by the digital revolution. It has worked with partners to establish Digital Development Agencies in Cheshire and Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside and Lancashire to achieve this at local level. The agencies help identify ICT priorities for their areas, work with local organisations to identify projects to address them, and secure the resources to make these projects happen.