



# MWEB BUSINESS

## VIRTUALLY PERFECT



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*South Africa's MWEB Business offers a range of affordable, tailored services for small and medium enterprises that address individual needs, improve efficiency and help realise cost savings*

**RESEARCH BY: JEFF ABBOTT**



**M**WEB Business is a different kind of ISP. The company has been around since 1998—effectively the start of the internet era—when its parent company, MWEB, forecast three things. Firstly, that the internet was going to radically change the way business was done; that the connectivity requirements of South Africa’s businesses were going to be very different to those of home users; and that connectivity solutions designed and developed for large corporates would be beyond the reach of most businesses in South Africa.

MWEB Business was set up to address all these concerns and requirements. Building on MWEB’s advanced infrastructure, MWEB Business is able to deliver innovative, industrial-strength, quality business solutions at exceptionally competitive rates without compromising on service, security or reliability.

“Our solutions cover all aspects of both wired and wireless connectivity; but we also offer hosting services, hosted applications, security and telephony solutions,” explains Andre Joubert, general manager of MWEB Business. “Our capabilities reach right down to the management of internal information between employees as well as between business partners and suppliers. Our vision of what the internet can do for business and our strategy for putting it to work for our customers extends beyond tomorrow.

“Because one size never fits all, we have developed the expertise to tailor solutions to each of our customers’ specific needs, ensuring that these add real value and



General manager  
Andre Joubert

insight to their businesses,” he continues.

The company has also teamed up with reseller and wholesale partners around the country who work with it to supply end-users with either white-labelled or MWEB Business-branded products.

### CONNECTIVITY—HOW TO BE A WINNER

Broadband is currently available in South Africa at exceptionally affordable prices—which is surely good news for consumers and businesses?

“Well, yes and no,” says Joubert. “While the highly competitive environment surrounding uncapped broadband solutions means end-users are paying less for their ADSL connectivity than ever before, there are also huge potential pitfalls—particularly for business users.”

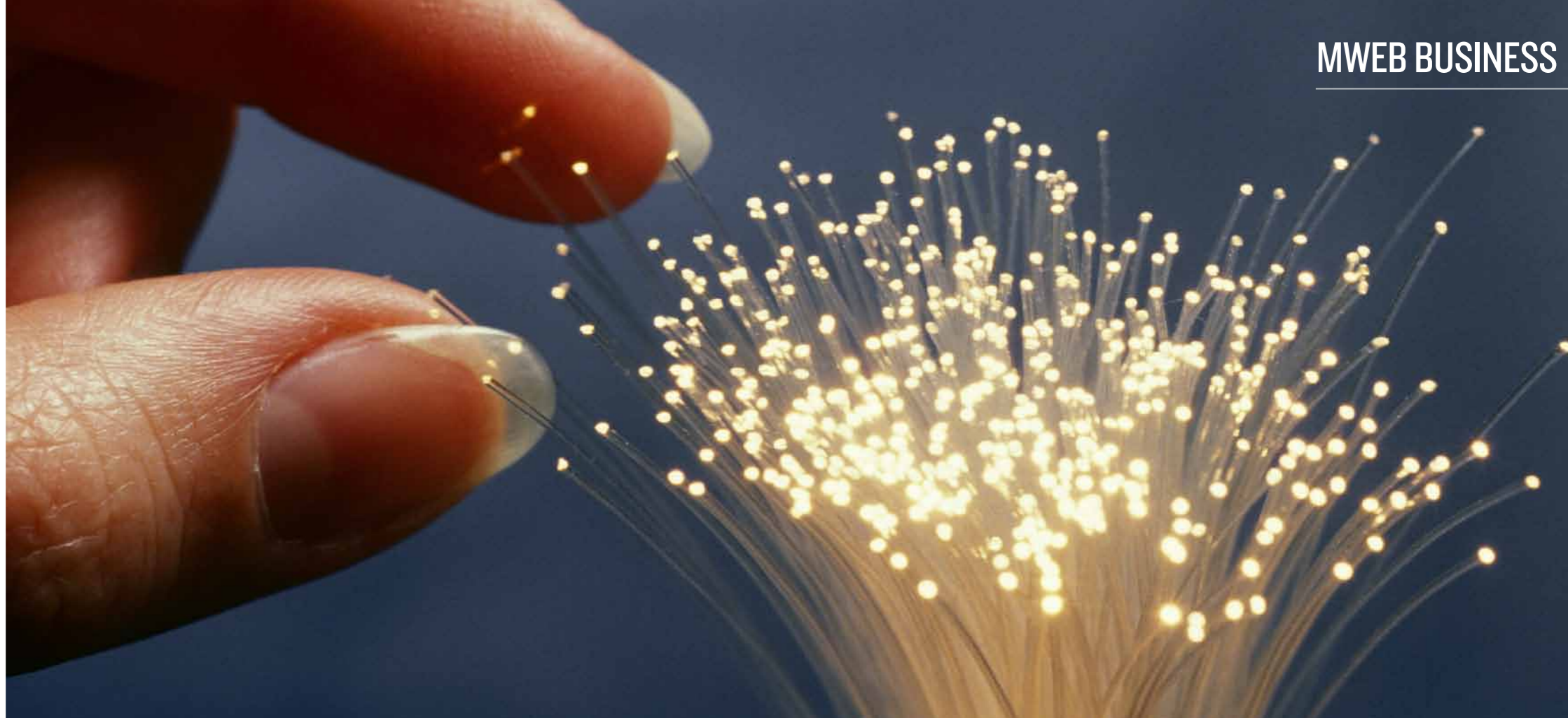
That’s because not all uncapped ADSL offerings, not even those labelled ‘business uncapped’, offer the same performance. There is a very real danger that a business could find itself trapped into a contract for an uncapped ADSL solution that is totally unsuited to its business requirements.

“MWEB Business advises that when choosing uncapped ADSL services, businesses should clearly understand the limits of the service being offered and match this against

their own requirements. Armed with this knowledge, the business would be better placed to make a more informed decision about the service it wants,” says Joubert.

Joubert explains that because MWEB Business’s uncapped ADSL offerings are not only uncapped but also unshaped and unthrottled, customers get the best possible performance at all times. In addition, MWEB Business’s uncapped ADSL offerings are

“OUR SOLUTIONS COVER ALL ASPECTS OF BOTH WIRED AND WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY; BUT WE ALSO OFFER HOSTING SERVICES, HOSTED APPLICATIONS, SECURITY AND TELEPHONY SOLUTIONS”



New fibre networks are coming on stream all the time

available in four different speeds—1Mbps, 2Mbps, 4Mbps and 10Mbps—which means that businesses can choose the product that best suits their business requirements and budget.

### MOVING TO MAINSTREAM

Affordable, high speed fibre-optic internet connectivity is rapidly becoming a viable option for South African businesses of all sizes, and is set to become the connectivity option of choice for many within the next few years. Fixed-line, ethernet-based fibre connectivity services provide a highly reliable and continuously available connectivity option with the equivalent of leased line performance, but which scale more easily and affordably should capacity need to increase.

With new fibre networks coming on stream all the time, MWEB Business is partnering with network providers, extending the company’s fibre connectivity offering to businesses across a growing geographical area. For those businesses located in areas in which fibre connectivity is not available—or where the cost of a fibre link is still hard to justify—a bonded ADSL solution remains a viable option. This is where up to four ADSL lines are grouped together to form one logical connection, offering higher speeds and throughput.

### DRIVING VPN GROWTH

VPN (virtual private network) technology, which has been around for more than a decade, is entering a new boom phase on

the back of the rapid uptake of mobile, remote and cloud computing services by organisations of all sizes. ADSL VPNs have long found favour among businesses with multiple branches by acting as cost-effective and secure branch connectors.

With the advent of uncapped ADSL, VPNs are now uncapped branch connectors. With an ADSL VPN, organisations can establish a secure, encrypted channel through which data can be safely transferred between all

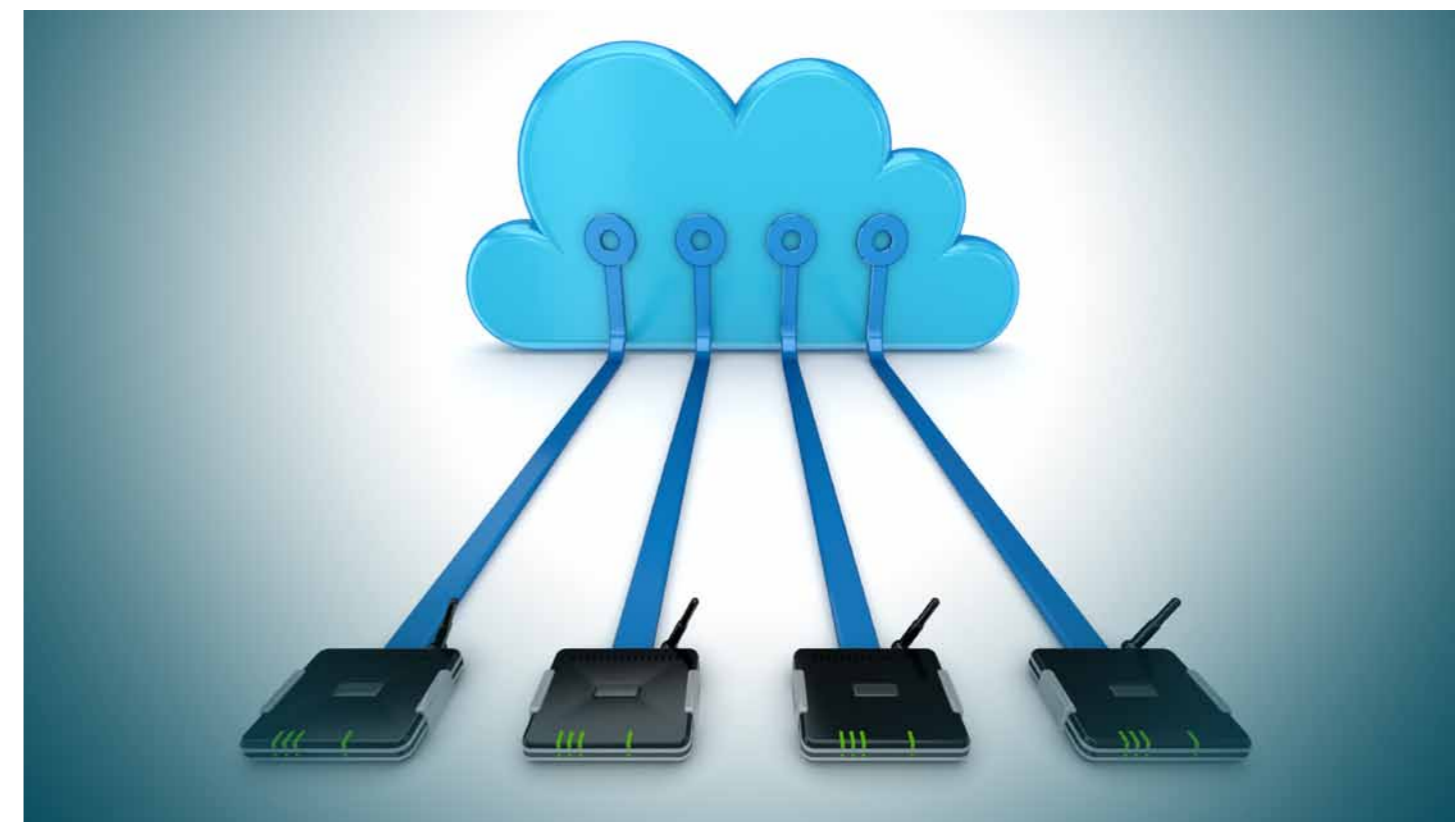
locations across the internet. VPNs also enable crucial business applications such as accounting systems that are designed for use purely in a private network to be used across the public internet.

Accessing the corporate database from a public hotspot can be dangerous. In order for employees to gain secure access to servers on the company's network from home, airport lounges, customers' offices, hotels or coffee shops anywhere in the world, a VPN

“OUR CAPABILITIES REACH RIGHT DOWN TO THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERNAL INFORMATION BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AS WELL AS BETWEEN BUSINESS PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS”



VPN connections are secure and robust



The most cost-effective solution for businesses requiring more speed is bonded ADSL

is essential. Similarly, as enterprise systems are increasingly hosted on remote cloud servers, and employees work from software-as-a-service applications, network security will become much more difficult. A VPN considerably reduces security concerns.

Joubert points out that a VPN client must be installed on all the devices used by employees to access the internal network—desktops, notebooks and mobile devices—to avoid security breaches.

#### **BONDED ADSL**

The advent of technologies such as fibre has led many to the belief that ADSL has passed its sell-by date and is well due for replacement. “Our contention is that while all connectivity technologies have their

place, ADSL broadband will remain the preferred choice for internet connections for the foreseeable future in South Africa. That's because, despite its drawbacks, it remains the most affordable, reliable internet access solution for most businesses throughout the country.”

However, ADSL doesn't always deliver the internet connectivity speed required by businesses in today's fast paced world. “The most cost-effective solution for businesses that require more speed is bonded ADSL, which has the potential to be almost as fast as a leased line but is considerably less expensive.”

#### **BARRIERS TO VOIP TUMBLING**

Voice over IP, or VoIP, is starting to come into its own in South Africa as the majority of

obstacles to widespread VoIP adoption have been, or are being addressed. As a result, the uptake of VoIP in South Africa is likely to increase significantly in the next year or two.

“With the advent of uncapped, unshaped, unthrottled ADSL, and the rapidly declining cost of quality, high-speed, business-class connectivity, connectivity barriers to VoIP are being addressed,” says Joubert. “Today, we recommend that businesses considering a VoIP solution invest in nothing less than a 4Mbps connection.”

#### **CAPTURING MOBILITY**

Business mobility has come a long way from the days when it just meant

business people remaining in contact with customers, colleagues and suppliers via a cell phone. Any time away from the office can now be highly productive time, thanks to major advances in connectivity technology.

“The anywhere, anytime, secure, fast and affordable ADSL connectivity that’s available today from MWEB Business ensures that your office—your server, your data files, your software applications, your email, everything you would normally access from your desk—is right there with you when you need it,” says Joubert.

If you don’t have ADSL access, MWEB

“BUSINESSES SHOULD CLEARLY UNDERSTAND THE LIMITS OF THE SERVICE BEING OFFERED AND MATCH THIS AGAINST THEIR OWN REQUIREMENTS”

Business’ 3G APN (access point name) offering delivers the freedom of cellular mobility and the security and robustness of a fixed line, virtual private network (VPN) connection in a single, cost-effective package. “Your secure mobile connectivity option can be used for email and to access your company’s local or wide

area network and servers as well as your cloud applications, from locations where landline connectivity isn’t available,” explains Joubert.

#### **SERVER SAVINGS**

Servers are at the heart of a business: they run all the business’s applications as well as its website and email. Businesses can protect their servers by housing them in a custom-built secure, fire-proof, flood-proof, climate-controlled, access-controlled data centre on their premises.

Alternatively, at a fraction of the cost, MWEB Business can host the servers in its purpose-built, ultra-secure data centre that provides a 24/7 guard service, security alarms, security cameras and high-tech access control; a managed firewall; an uninterruptible power supply from multiple UPSs and back-up generators; a climate controlled environment; and sophisticated fire protection, including fire alarms and a fire suppressant system.

“You don’t even have to purchase a server if you don’t want to,” affirms Joubert. “We will rent you the latest, most appropriate model for your needs and, with reliable, fast, uncapped ADSL,



Server room

you no longer have to worry about running out of bandwidth capacity or paying exorbitant top-up fees to access your servers.”

### **NO MORE SERVER OVERLOAD**

Uncapped ADSL also makes it possible for businesses to opt for sophisticated solutions such as virtual hosted servers. But why would any business want or need a hosted virtual server?

Well, what do you do if your server can't cope with a high volume of transactions; falls over; or simply can't cope with the strain from the rapid growth of your business?

Instead of doing costly hardware upgrades or replacements, MWEB Business's Virtual Hosting solutions address these issues quickly, easily and cost-effectively. The company's Virtual Hosting packages work by partitioning several large physical servers (hosted at the secure MWEB Business Data Centre) into multiple virtual servers, each with its own operating software. "One or more of those virtual servers can be yours, doing precisely what you need it to, in just a few days. Your server and all your data are stored securely in the cloud, meaning your files are in an online environment hosted by MWEB Business, but controlled by you," says Joubert.

Joubert explains that each virtual server can be rebooted independently. Clients can access their virtual machines via a control panel and scale their specs up or down according to their needs, and for as long as the changes are required. "Your virtual server can never be stolen or set on fire,



Cloud computing does not require major investment in IT infrastructure and skills

and thanks to our superb infrastructure in the unlikely event of a failure, our failover mechanisms kick in, guaranteeing that you have 99.9 per cent uptime," states Joubert. "There really is no downside."

### **DEMYSTIFYING THE CLOUD**

If you use Facebook, Skype, internet banking or Gmail, then you are already a cloud computing user. One of the most compelling benefits of cloud computing is the fact that it delivers when-you-need-it, where-you-need-it data and applications, without the need for any major investment in IT infrastructure and skills.

MWEB Business operates multiple data centres in Johannesburg and Cape Town from where it has delivered a range of hosted services to South African businesses for years, including Microsoft Exchange Email, VM servers, storage, back-up and collaboration tools. Additional cloud services such as hosted PBX voice and video conferencing are also in the pipeline.

"The uptake of business cloud services has been slower in South Africa [than internationally]. However, at MWEB Business, we are starting to see a marked increase in interest from businesses of all sizes that recognise the benefits of the cloud in terms of cost savings, efficiencies, security and convenience," concludes Joubert. ■

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