How Do I Connect to the Internet? Let Me Count the Ways

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is a growing network of networks which spans the entire globe. Access to the Internet is vital to academic and governmental organizations, and is increasingly important for commercial organizations as well. Internet resources, including electronic mail, USENET news, library catalogs, archives, and databases, are used daily by many of the Internet's millions of users via thousands of networks in over 100 countries.

Discussed will be considerations companies should make when deciding whether or not to connect to the Internet. Some of the disadvantages include the potential for computer security problems and the increased costs for system and network maintenance and management. The advantages include increased productivity and access to information, factors critical in a globally competitive economy.

Many commercial network service providers offer access to the Internet and to the Commercial Internet Exchange (CIX) which supports TCP/IP and OSI public data internetworking services to the general public with no restrictions on the types of traffic allowed. These service providers offer a wide range of access options, from simple dial-in computer accounts for electronic mail to high speed, continuous, full Internet connections, at a correspondingly wide range of costs. These costs include investments in hardware and software as well as startup and monthly charges due to a telecommunications provider and the network provider. Many of these access options and their corresponding costs from different service providers will be discussed for a typical company site in East Tennessee. In addition, hardware and software configurations necessary for each method of access will be presented.

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