

HighNet Take on 2020 and Beyond



Last year they celebrated the stunning achievement of 25 successful years in business, but who could have predicted what the months to follow would bring for Scotland's leading telecoms provider. Like all businesses out there, the shock of the COVID-19 crisis hit them fast meaning much of 2020 has been spent navigating uncharted waters and coping with disruption, all whilst supporting their customers and pushing forward with plans for the future.

Led by a father and son team, HighNet is a well-established family run business, successfully employing over 50 employees across their Inverness and Glasgow locations. They have been bringing cutting edge technology to customers across the UK for over 25 years, and with customer service and innovation at their heart, enjoy a terrific reputation in the business community.

To say it's been an eventful year would be an understatement, and there's absolutely no doubt that during the past few months the telecoms industry has

had to play an even more central role in how people work and go about their everyday activities. Just think about how many people, overnight, were working from home and how a whole new working landscape developed in only a matter of weeks.

Commenting on this, Managing Director at HighNet David J Siegel said, "We have always been an innovative bunch, and it's become clear this year that now, more than ever, we had to put that to use. For us, 2020 set us a clear challenge. How could we, as telecoms specialists, support the business community with the tools to stay productive as homeworking swiftly became a new norm? In the early days of the pandemic, our team worked at such pace, delivering something like 2000 Horizon Collaborate set-ups enabling video conferencing and over 300 new mobile phone connections in a matter of weeks."

Of course, no business was left untouched, and, as community spirit took hold amongst friends,

family, and neighbours, this was extended to the business community, with companies looking out for their employees and peers. HighNet took this seriously and got busy thinking of other ways they could help. One swift piece of action when the initial lockdown lifted was the introduction of a COVID protection product which would give their customers a payment holiday during any future lockdowns.

On this, David said "We very quickly knew that the #initttogether theme was for us and that the key to getting through this was about businesses coming together and supporting each other



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David J Siegel

on a journey full of unknowns. By offering the option of a financial breather for our customers, we hoped it would give them some reassurance. It was our way of saying we know what you are going through, and here's one of the ways we can help."

Throughout its years in business, HighNet has enjoyed some pretty impressive accolades, and 2020 would prove to be no different. This time it was to be an impressive win at the annual Comms National Awards, picking up the prize for the Best Unified Comms Solution for SMEs. Regarded as the top awards in the industry and with submissions from all over the UK, this award speaks volumes about HighNet's dedication to product development and innovation.

Katrina Macleod, Service Delivery Director commented: "The CNA awards was a real highlight for us at HighNet.



Everyone in the industry knows what a big deal these awards are, and it's a brilliant opportunity to celebrate all things innovation and excellence in the business telecoms space. The fact that judging is by a panel of experienced experts with a wealth of industry knowledge makes the recognition even more meaningful, and we are so grateful to the team here for all their hard work and focus."

The award winning solution was for a customer with a head office in Inverness and 28 branches covering all of the Highlands and Islands. HighNet was able to design and build a new private network to provide secure and resilient data connectivity between their sites and to the internet. With this network providing the backbone to support it, the deployment of a modern hosted unified comms solution enabled the customer to communicate more effectively with their customers and internally between staff, whether working from their normal office location or from home. It also enabled the removal of the old analogue and digital (ISDN) phone lines, replaced the old telephony systems, and gave the customer the foundations to move forward with further digital transformation and IT projects.

A trusted leader when it comes to delivering firsts, there's little surprise that HighNet is also leading the charge when it comes to supporting businesses as they say goodbye to traditional ISDN phone lines. In 2019 BT Openreach

announced that by 2025 the current UK copper phone network will be switched off across the UK, and in its place will be an 'All-IP' network using VoIP technology for all calls.

Technology and Innovation Director David Alldritt thinks the cut off is absolutely warranted. "Businesses need more from their communications package to thrive in today's world. In recent years we have seen organisations switch to hosted solutions as a way to empower their workforce with the tools to be productive wherever and whenever they are working. Gone are the days of being at a desk for eight hours a day, five days a week, and if companies aren't equipped for this agile style of working, sadly they'll be left behind. Also, what some people don't know is that adopting a modern business VoIP solution also enables full integration with other business systems such as email, CRM, and other software packages, so it's all-encompassing, and in turn, saves businesses time and money."

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David Alldritt

The adoption of VoIP by businesses has been held back in some part by the old broadband infrastructure which has struggled to keep up with the pace of change in consumer and business behaviour. We all use more bandwidth, and we expect our broadband to be reliable. Yet despite the use of the words 'fibre broadband' to describe the majority of services available today, most of them still rely on old copper wires into the home or office, and that weak link is holding back broadband speeds and reliability. That's why HighNet has been at the forefront of bringing full-fibre Gigabit-capable internet connectivity to businesses in Scotland.

devices to be simultaneously streaming TV, browsing the internet and online gaming with no impact on the parent who might be working late and still connected to their office network. The move to diversify beyond our B2B market is a very logical one for us. The world is becoming inherently more digital, and we have the network infrastructure in place to deliver the very best connectivity backed up by years of experience in operating an ISP network. We also have a lot of experience of working in partnership with CityFibre, using their full-fibre infrastructure to connect our business customers in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen."



So, what's next for Scotland's leading telecoms provider? Well, it all sounds quite exciting as we discover that diversification is on the cards. Very soon, HighNet will use their expertise to help their local community take advantage of the benefits of the digital world by delivering best in class Gigabit broadband to the home, across the city of Inverness. David J Siegel comments, "The service we'll be offering to the consumer market is designed to provide Gigabit-capable broadband at an affordable price, but it isn't just about 'more megabits per pound'.

Our service will have some key benefits for home users which will make for a much better online experience, such as enabling multiple

Despite the many challenges thrown at the business community in 2020, HighNet has shown that by maintaining their customer focus, looking at how best to help and support those customers, and always striving to be best in class, it is possible to keep building for the future.

For more about HighNet's full-fibre Gigabit broadband project, please see page 16



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