

**DATACOMM SERVICES IN HONG KONG: HOW GOOD ARE THEY AND
WILL THEY COPE FOR THE FUTURE?**

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INTRODUCTION

Effective datacommunications have been a cornerstone of a number of business successes in the past enabling better customer service and timely information flows. This will be more relevant in the future. How good are Hong Kong's datacommunications and does the current environment stand us in good stead for the future?

To examine this question the approach taken will be to look at the problem firstly from a business perspective then review what is available in reality. Although it is early days yet in terms of the fixed wireline competition some strengths and weaknesses can already be drawn out from a corporate perspective and examples will be discussed.

But should one deal with telephone companies directly anyway? Some comparisons on what value added service providers offer will be briefly be covered.

Finally the talk will reflect on what the future has in store with an emphasis on the opportunities and restrictions which will be encountered.

**STRATEGIC BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS FROM IT AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN PARTICULAR**

In this section a brief overview of what are the general IT practices and policies which respond to business drivers. How this then flows into datacommunication requirements both from an actual and forecasted basis will be examined.

The focus to date on data communications needs has been on bandwidth, service type and basic cost structures. However in the future the issues are likely to be complicated by security, network management and more complex service cost offerings. In the time available the matters will be touched on to put issues in perspective.

Once the need has been put into context, how service suppliers meet user demands is the next logical step.

OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT SERVICES BY ORGANISATIONS

Competition has been introduced into the fixed wireline network service. How this has manifested in services to feed customers demands will be outlined. There will be no attempt to compare service for service as often many factors are involved and these demand detailed analysis. Where appropriate some features may be brought out to clarify this point, for example if high degrees of network management are being provided by the supplier.

In addition there are the value added service providers busy in the Hong Kong market. In the time available two companies will be looked at to review their service strategies and target markets.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THESE OPTIONS FROM A CORPORATE POINT OF VIEW

The broader view of what a business needs to support its operations will again be touched on. How corporations view various service suppliers' strengths and weaknesses is an interesting mix of practicality on the one hand and risk limitation strategies on the other.

A case study of a large local telecommunications user will be outlined on what is currently in place, what recent changes have occurred particularly with the advent of competition and what future services are foreseen to meet various requirements.

A VIEW OF THE FUTURE

The pace of technological change in the 80s differed between computer and telecommunication suppliers. As we move into the later part of the 90s it is arguable that this change will be reversed. All supply organisations are looking to provide network services of one type or another, be it basic bandwidth requirements or sophisticated outsourcing agreements: can Hong Kong's environment keep up in the global context needed?

Technological issues, once the dominant consideration when establishing a datacommunications network now is viewed along side ones of data protection legislation, global service support and time to market for new products. The talk will touch on these factors and comment on their likely effects on the local environment.