

## **Cables Needn't Break Your Business, Says Huge Networks**

South Africa's had a challenging couple of months with Stage 6 load-shedding making its appearance for the first time followed by the recent SAT-3 communications cable break.

However, just as Stage 6 load-shedding came and went, good news for local Internet users is that the cable repair vessel Leon Thevenin is well on its way to repairing the damaged SAT-3 submarine cable that connects SA with the rest of the world.

"Not only does South Africa have a remarkable ability to bounce back from events that seem insurmountable at the time, but our ICT (Information and Communications Technology) industry has invested considerable resources in building a local web that is much more responsive, robust and resilient than it used to be," says Anthony Engelbrecht, Technical Director of Huge Networks. We are today, for instance, able to access roughly half of all the online content we need right here in SA within milliseconds.

Indeed, the country's Internet Service Providers' Association (ISPA) commented in January that a SAT-3 cable break 15 years ago would have meant no international connectivity at all and extremely limited local content and services. In 2020 however, redundancy created by multiple cable systems and SA's dynamic local peering ecosystem means that a significant undersea cable break had a manageable impact on local users.

South Africans dependent on Internet-based voice and data communications links felt the impact of the SAT-3 break, in particular, with the degree of impact largely depending on their choice of Internet Service Provider (ISP). The local media reported that some ISP clients were barely affected, some experienced speeds half as slow and some up to 95% slower than usual.

For their part, Huge clients reported a negligible impact on their daily IP-based voice and data experience. "Our focus on smart routing means we're always thinking ahead. We replaced the missing SAT-3 capacity with capacity from other cable suppliers and we did so in a seamless fashion that mostly went unnoticed by our clients," explained Mr Engelbrecht.

Aside from smart routing that prioritises a ready supply of redundant capacity, Mr Engelbrecht says there are four other ways that ISPs and their clients can minimise the business fallout from future cable breaks:

- Include cable breaks in Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in order to create certainty and so each party knows what remedies are available. Most importantly, SLAs should address the question of spare capacity in the event of cable route failures.
- ISPs should not only have dual cable providers but they should enlist the services of one provider traversing the East of the country, and one landing in the West of South Africa.

- Local businesses reliant on good international communications access should make sure their ISPs will have the required support from their international transit providers in the event of cable breaks.
- Make sure you purchase business critical services - and not just access for non-critical social media activities, for example - from your ISP that support your commercial needs. If you haven't specifically requested some sort of business critical guarantees, then prepare to tolerate a potential degradation in some of your access services for the duration of a cable issue.
- Become familiar with tweaks one can implement in the event of slow and congested web access such as requesting your staff to reduce or stop all non-critical Internet usage.

Finally, Mr Engelbrecht highlights the importance of an excellent phone system. "In the event of an undersea cable break, being able to pick up the phone and make a crystal clear voice call to a valued business partner could prove to be an invaluable experience," he concludes.

Part of the listed Huge Group (JSE: HUG) and now incorporating Otel, Huge Networks is a data service provider and communications company. From being focused on fibre provision, the firm can today provide SME and corporate clients alike with a comprehensive range of LTE and microwave solutions that can easily be used for failover and redundant network access for both voice and data access.

More information: [www.hugenetworks.co.za](http://www.hugenetworks.co.za).