

# CASE STUDY



## **London's Top LAN Gaming Venue Equips its LAN with a Deadly Weapon – An Ultra Fast D-Link Network Solution**

### **The Business**

The emergence of "fun pubs" in the 1980's and more recently "Internet Cafes" offered a radical departure from the traditional pub and cafe culture. The option now exists to do much more than just drink and eat. A new concept of communal entertainment has arrived in London, which is set to render all its predecessors obsolete. The Playing Fields, complete with the decor of a trendy capital city night spot and a number of multi-player, networked computer games is the natural progression from its 20<sup>th</sup> Century siblings. "It is a totally new form of entertainment experience," enthuses Charles Allen, The Playing Fields Technical Director.

The Playing Fields was established in 1997 and offers the most up-to-date multi-player computer games from a variety of developers such as EA, Activision and Microsoft. The games are delivered through hardware from companies such as AMD, Guillemot and Carrera, to the gamers in the venue.

The company opened its first venue in Whitfield Street, London in February 1998 offering customers the chance to pit themselves against others on state-of-the art computers with state-of-the art games. The success of the first venue prompted the opening of a second in Victoria, London in November 1999. Since opening, the company has attracted a wide range of gamers, thus, generating interest among the wider games industry, as well as the press.

The Playing Fields concept is currently unique within the UK: no other operator offers multi-player games from licensed venues. However, the multi-player games market is set for explosive growth with a predicted rise from 700,000 gamers in Europe today to over five million by 2002.

### **The Challenge**

The Challenge for The Playing Fields is to offer the general public games and machines that, under normal circumstances, you just cannot get for the home. An essential component of this is the network connecting the systems.

"Here at The Playing Fields we look for three requirements from our network – speed, reliability and low maintenance," says Allen. "Our systems need to be at their very fastest, as well as being dependable with very little need for maintenance so that our staff can spend their time looking after the customers and not worrying about the systems. In a multi-player game, if you give an instruction from your console to an on-screen player/soldier/aircraft to make a certain manoeuvre and there is a time delay, the gamers get frustrated – no matter how minuscule the wait. This is one of the problems with multi-player Internet games. When this occurs there is a chorus from the gamers of 'LAG!' Until November 1999 we used unbranded Ethernet cards at the centre of the network. At this time the speed of the system was such that LAG was a regular complaint."

A network to circumvent the need for the "LAG!" chorus was required and prompted the installation of a network based on a series of D-Link products comprising fast 10/100Mbps NIC's and a 24-port Smart Switch. "This change has seen the consistent delivery of the three features we look for from the network," says Allen. "Since switching to D-Link we have had no complaints about network speed. I can't recall the last time that I heard shouts of LAG!"

## **The Solution**

Each PC uses a DFE-530TX dual speed PC network card connected to a DES-1024 unmanaged autosensing switch. A DFE-570TX four-port dual speed server card provides 800Mbps of bandwidth from server to switch. This allows gamers to play together which is far more fun and rewarding than playing against the computer.

There is also a DP-300 print server on the network allowing printing to the two servers from up to the PCs.

## **The Outcome**

Apart from removing the threat of being deafened by disgruntled gamers, the new system has bestowed other positive effects upon The Playing Fields. "Major games manufacturers are turning to The Playing Fields to showcase their new games to the Press. They have to be confident in the system that is running their game at such a showcase. Any sign of slowness may prompt a journalist to make a comment about the speed of the game itself. Manufacturers come here because they know that our machines perform well. The D-Link products also allow us to advertise the fact that we have the fastest systems around. This has resulted in even more software and hardware companies using us to promote their products," said Allen.

As for D-Link, "The Playing Fields is a real life example of what D-Link has to offer – top level performance, total reliability and innovative technology - whether it be for a corporate, Soho user or a serious LAN gamer. D-Link's new range of LAN and WAN home networking kits will put D-Link at the forefront of home networking," said Jamie Kelley, D-Link's Marketing Manager for UK and Ireland.

## **The Future**

For Playing Fields customers, the future promises to be even more exciting. "We are currently trialling a number of sites around the country so that a number of venues can be networked. Using D-Link products again, people will be able to compete with others, not just in the same venue, but in another town or city."

## **About D-Link**

Since its inception in 1986 D-Link has forged the way in the manufacture of highly engineered quality networking solutions that it brings to the market at a cost effective price. D-Link's understanding of and commitment to the needs of the "network customer" has enabled D-Link to become a market leader of products that are acclaimed around the world. D-Link (Europe) Ltd operates in 17 European countries.

D-Link's commitment to "Building Networks for People" is the driving force behind its success, enabling it to provide flexible cost effective highly engineered products from LAN and WAN to mobile solutions.

D-Link's new family of modular routers, switches and innovative USB products provide customers with the assurance that buying D-Link is synonymous with quality, high performance and prudent investment.

## **The Products**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Description</b>
DFE-530TX x 24	10/100Mbps PCI networks cards
DFE-570TX x 1	Four-port 10/100Mbps server card for connection from server to switch for 800Mbps bandwidth
DES-1024 x 1	24-port, unmanaged, autosensing switching with Trunking (up to 800Mbps in this set-up)
DP-300 x 1	Print server to connect two printers