Why Giving Free Internet Access is Good for Business

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Introduction…..

Many businesses in the hospitality industry and other segments can improve sales by providing Internet access. Travelers for example, are increasingly making decisions based on availability of Internet access.

Businesses have to decide between charging for Internet use and giving free access. Free Internet is certainly a competitive advantage but what about the loss of income that would otherwise cover the costs?

This presentation describes how to provide free Internet access and maximize the benefits for your business.

A free wireless Internet hot spot can still provide income from other sources to cover the cost of providing Internet access and this is also explained.

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Which businesses benefit by offering free Internet

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- Free Internet is an advantage for any business that is located close to a competitor and wants a competitive differentiator to attract the competitor's customers
  - **Hotel, Motel**
  - **Marina**
  - **Restaurant, coffee bar**

- Where there is no competition a business can charge for Internet access
  - **Trade shows**
  - **All inclusive resort**
  - **Conference center**
  - **RV park**
  - **Airport**

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Business benefits through offering free Internet access

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- Competitive differentiator
  - **Free Internet is a high visibility promotion**
  - **Free Internet can help a customer to decide between you and your competitor**

- Enhance customer loyalty
  - **Customers will return for free Internet**

- Encourage customers to go to your website
  - **The hot spot login page should link to your website**

- Advertise other products and services you offer
  - **Let customers see products/services when they login**

- 3rd party advertising opportunity
  - **Resell hot spot advertising banners to nearby businesses who want to sell to your customers**

Leverage your free Internet access as a marketing tool

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- Ensure 'free internet' is included in all advertising campaigns
  - **Free Internet will attract undecided customers**

- Impose conditions on customers for free Internet access
  - **Customer provides email address that can be used for subsequent marketing campaigns**

- Upgrade your business website so that wireless Internet hot spot users can access additional services
  - **Example: hotels can provide room service ordering or automated checkout via the wireless Internet hot spot**
  - **Automation can reduce staff costs**
  - **Novel features get customer referrals**

What is required to provide Internet to customers?

- Internet access is provided to customers in several different ways, common methods are;
  - **Wireless Internet hot spot: the customer brings a laptop computer**
  - **Business center: a computer is provided for the customer**
  - **Kiosk: a durable computer made for frequent use**
  - **Wired rooms: for hotels and conference centers**

- The wireless Internet hot spot is easy to install and appropriate for many types of business
  - **However many wireless access points may be needed to cover a large building such as a hotel**

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Important equipment features for a free wireless Internet hot spot installation

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- Look for wireless Internet hot spot equipment that will provide the following essential features

    – **Option of customizing the wireless Internet hot spot login (splash) page with your own brand and design**
    – **Login page integrated with the business web site by including links to the business web site pages**
    – **Disclaimer page: terms and conditions, responsibilities**
    – **Optional access code control to prevent non-customers accessing the wireless Internet hot spot**
    – **Banner advertising for the business and for 3rd parties**
    – **Traffic management to prevent abuse by customers**
    – **Alarm warning to business owner if the equipment fails**
    – **Traffic statistics to monitor use by customers**

Customize the wireless Internet hot spot login page

- When a customer wants to connect to a wireless Internet hot spot the computer browser first displays the login page
  - **The hot spot equipment has a 'captive portal'**
- There are two options before the customer gets Internet access
  - **Click on a disclaimer button, or**
  - **Enter an access code that limits use to customers only**

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Discover the Treasures of
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HOTEL RESORT & MARINA · ABACO, BAHAMAS

Treasure Cay Internet Hot Spot

DINING AT TREASURE CAY | Fishing Tournaments | Real Estate

Local Events | Weather | TREASURE CAY HOTEL - RESORT - MARINA

Please enter your code
[   ] [Connect me]

Contact Treasure Cay Hotel if you would like to use this hotspot

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Example of a customized log in page

Integrate the login page with the company website

- The wireless Internet hot spot should encourage customers to use your web site as this is one of your sales and marketing tools
  - **The login page should have direct links to your web site for features that will interest customers**
  - **Encourage customers to set these links as 'bookmarks' in their browser**
  - **Your web site is a customer loyalty tool**

- If your web site provides valuable information for your customers they will return to browse your site long after using your wireless Internet hot spot
  - **Spend time and effort on your web site design to maximize sales benefits – consult a web design professional**

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The importance of a disclaimer when customers logs in

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- When your customers use your free Internet service it is important that you ensure they click on a button that says "I agree to the terms and conditions……."

- Protect yourself from lawsuits and disputes
  - **State that you have no responsibility for the quality of the Internet service and do not provide any type of support**
    - **Avoid expensive support costs as you are providing a free service**
  - **State that you do not permit your customers to download copyright protected or illegal material**
    - **Don't get sued by organizations like RIAA**
  - **State that you reserve the right to withdraw the Internet service at any time – block abusive customers**

Prevent wireless Internet hot spot access by people who are not customers

- If the free wireless Internet hot spot is located in an environment where non-customers can get access then install access control
  - **You give your customer a code to get Internet access**
- Select a wireless Internet hot spot equipment supplier who can provide you with free access control codes
  - **Access codes are typed into a box on the login screen**

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Treasure Cay Internet Hot Spot

DINING AT TREASURE CAY | Fishing Tournaments | Real Estate
Local Events | Weather | TREASURE CAY HOTEL - RESORT - MARINA

Please enter your code
[   ] Connect me

Contact Treasure Cay Hotel if you would like to use this hotspot

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Login (Splash) page with customized graphics

Enter access code into login box

Include advertising banners on the log in page

- A customer always sees the login page first when connecting to the wireless Internet hot spot
  - **Banners are shown on the log in page and all customers see them before connecting to the Internet**
  - **Banners 'click through' to the advertiser's website**
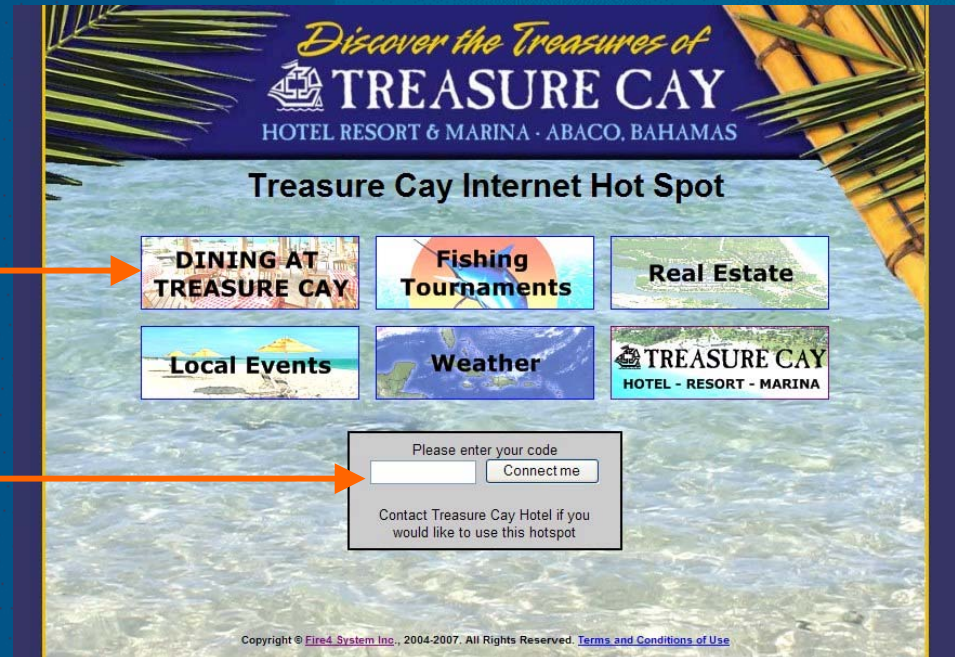 - **A timer can log out users, forcing repetitive views**

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Banner advertisements

Login box

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Treasure Cay Internet Hot Spot

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Local Events | Weather | TREASURE CAY HOTEL - RESORT - MARINA

Please enter your code
[   ] Connect me

Contact Treasure Cay Hotel if you would like to use this hotspot

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Economics of 3rd party wireless Internet hot spot advertising

- Example of a hotel that gives free Internet to attract customers: the wireless Internet hot spot has advertising banners

  - **Free Internet is a competitive advantage so the hotel provides free wireless Internet to all rooms**
  - **Logon (splash) page has 12 advertising banners**
  - **User is logged out after 30 mins, has to log in again**
  - **Hotel offers advertising to local businesses: restaurants, take away pizza, dry cleaners, travel agents, taxi cabs, theater, cinema, shopping mall**
  - **Option of click through to advertisers web site**
  - **Example; charge $150 /banner/month with click through or $75 /banner/month with no click through**
  - **Advertising sales can be from $900 to $1800 /month**

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Time out feature ensures the customer sees the advertising

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- Free wireless Internet hot spots with advertising have a time-out feature to guarantee that the customer will see the advertising with a specified frequency
  - **Limit use of the free hot spot to a pre-defined interval**
  - **After a specified time the customer has to log in again**

- Select wireless Internet hot spot equipment that has a programmable timer for the log in page function
  - **Disconnect customers after a preset time (e.g. 15 mins) forcing the customer to log in again and see the banner advertising once more**

- Pop-up advertising is also possible however most browsers block this feature

Prevent customers hogging the free Internet service

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- Some customers will abuse any free service and use it in such a way that prevents the majority of your customers getting a good service
  - **Some users will download music and videos that take all your DSL bandwidth**

- Your free Internet service must have 'bandwidth throttling' or 'traffic shaping' traffic management
  - **Traffic shaping is an electronic filter that detects when any user is downloading too much data and then limits the bandwidth available to that user**

- The result of traffic shaping is that a customer who downloads a lot of data finds the Internet becomes very slow

Alarm warning on failure of the wireless Internet hot spot equipment

3 2 4 4 4 2 4 5 3 0 4 3 5 5 4

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- When the free wireless Internet hot spot fails the business owner will find out when customers start to complain
  - **It is better to get a warning that the equipment has failed before customers discover the problem**

- Install wireless Internet hot spot equipment that includes an equipment monitoring feature
  - **Get an email if the equipment fails**
  - **Get a text message on your cell phone if the equipment fails**

- Ensure that the wireless Internet hot spot installer gets the alarm message and repairs the hot spot quickly
  - **This might require a maintenance agreement**

Usage statistics are a valuable tool for analysis

- Analyze how the free wireless Internet hot spot is being used by customers
  - **Usage statistics shows when and how much the wireless Internet hot spot is being used by customers**

- Select wireless Internet hot spot equipment that provides comprehensive information about usage
  - **Verify that the hot spot equipment has sufficient bandwidth for all the customers that use it**

- Business benefits come from frequent wireless Internet hot spot use by a high percentage of your customers
  - **If usage is below expectations then communicate to customers more effectively about free wireless Internet hot spot availability.**

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Marina wireless Internet hot spot design example

Hot Spot Example: Marina

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- A marina has large boats up to 150ft length.

- The harbor master's office is at ground level and has a DSL circuit
  - **An access point in the harbor master's office would be blocked by large boats**

- The solution is to put a repeater on an adjacent high rise
  - **With a backhaul link to an access point in the harbor master's office**

- The marina wants to limit wireless Internet hot spot access to customers only
  - **Provide customers with an access code that is valid for the duration of the boat's stay**

Plan view shown using Google maps

Hot Spot Example: Marina

- The yellow dot shows the harbor master's office

Relay Location – 120 degree sector antenna

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View of the marina and location of the repeater antenna

Hot Spot Example: Marina

- Repeater connects via backhaul wireless link to the access point in the harbor master's office

Relay Location – 120 degree sector antenna
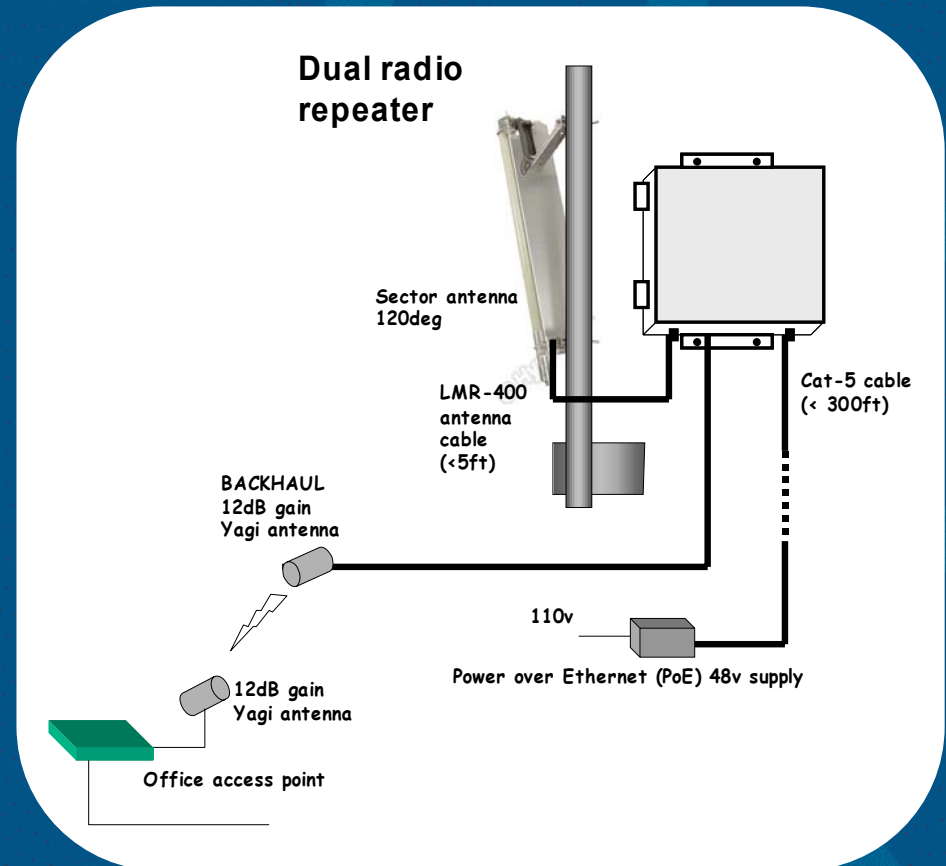
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Equipment schematic shows the components

Hot Spot Example: Marina

- A sector antenna gives the correct radiation pattern over the marina

- The antenna is mounted below the top of the building to reduce permitting

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- The repeater requires only power: data connection is via the backhaul

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Dual radio repeater

Sector antenna 120deg

Cat-5 cable (< 300ft)

LMR-400 antenna cable (<5ft)

BACKHAUL 12dB gain Yagi antenna

110v

Power over Ethernet (PoE) 48v supply

12dB gain Yagi antenna

Office access point

Access codes ensure that the wireless Internet hot spot is exclusive

Hot Spot Example: Marina

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- The free wireless Internet hot spot is exclusive for customer's use because each customer (boat captain) is given an access code for the hot spot

- The code is entered during the login process each time the customer connects to the Internet

Summary of economic benefits offering a free wireless Internet hot spot

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- Capture customers when buying decision is based on availability of free Internet access

- Improved customer loyalty results in frequent customer returns

- The wireless Internet hot spot owner can market other products/services directly to the customer

- Greater potential for referrals from satisfied customers

- Create an awareness of the businesses web site to provide a sales channel to customers

- Potential income from 3rd party advertisers

For more information …..

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Products for public Internet networks:

Fire4 Systems Inc. – www.fire4.com
   Tel: 305-558-8773

Hospitality industry public Internet solutions

Hospitality Internet Solutions – www.hospitality-internet.com
   Tel: 305-394-6333

OEM software customers – www.avansu.com

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