

Simultaneous delivery services for the City

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Variants of this service now exist, so it turns out to have been a good idea

Concept

Time sensitive information services: fast delivery, and equalised delivery variants

The Problems

- some information has a value which is related to its arrival time, such as commercial information about firms, arriving in the City. This is used by computers to make buy/sell decisions

The BT Opportunity

- high speed delivery services
- time equalisation services

Summary

As computers become more involved in financial decision making, and as they make these decisions faster, so the importance of receiving information quickly increases. It is not unreasonable to expect that advantages of a few microseconds over a competitor could become significant. If a broker can buy or sell shares slightly ahead of his competitors, he will have an advantage. It can thus be expected that such firms may be willing to pay for the privilege of receiving data faster than their competitors. BT could capitalise on this by offering fast delivery services.

This could be accomplished by various means.

The most obvious is to provide a more direct line between information source and destination.

Faster transmission media can also be used. For instance, copper transmits a signal faster than optical fibre, as does a free space radio or optical link (although bandwidth will be a potential problem for some information). Perhaps we could offer copper for fast transmission alongside fibre for bulk transmission.

Another method is to use higher priority levels in the same network. ATM allows different priorities of service. Data is generally treated as a lower priority compared to 'real-time' services such as voice. Perhaps another priority level could be used for 'premium data services'.

A more dubious method is to incorporate delays deliberately into links in an area and to remove these for a charge. This is close to blackmail and is not recommended.

A further service opportunity arises from this area, which is to offer equal delivery times. It is conceivable that OFTEL could enforce such services on BT if the City demanded fair service provision. Perhaps BT could charge for this. It could be accomplished by electronically equalising the transmission times, adding delays to the shorter links as needed.