

Portland Fish Exchange Says Online Auction is Quite a Catch, Due to High-Speed Internet from Time Warner Cable Business Class

FOR THOSE ACCUSTOMED TO HEARING THE STACCATO VOICE OF A CALL-OUT AUCTIONEER AT THE PORTLAND FISH EXCHANGE – WELL, IT MUST FEEL LIKE SOMETHING FISHY IS GOING ON.

In recent years, the daily fresh seafood auction held at the 30,000-square-foot refrigerated warehouse on a downtown dock in this bustling Maine city has been strangely quiet. Listen closely, though, and a visitor will hear keyboard tapping and mouse clicks instead of shouts from auction bidders.

“When we moved to an online auction, it took awhile for some of the established bidders to accept it,” said general manager Bert Jongerden, who oversees the operation of the City of Portland-owned facility, which annually processes over nine million pounds of ground fish that fishermen ply from one of the world’s most prolific fishing grounds, the Gulf of Maine.

“But now they all find it to be the best and most efficient way of doing business.”

Portland Fish Exchange uses high-speed Internet service from Time Warner Cable Business Class (TWCBC) for its online auction. According to Jongerden, the company moved to an online auction model at the request of larger buyers who had grown weary of shouldering the expense of onsite inspectors or buyers in Portland and at other nearby auctions in Gloucester and New Bedford, Mass.

Moving online allowed the buyers to centralize the process, greatly reducing labor and travel expenses, since the Exchange’s online auctioneer can easily solicit bids for each species and size of seafood available.

“Sure, everyone misses the excitement of the call-out auction, but this technology has enabled our clients to have better access to the auction,” noted Jongerden.

The key to an online auction is a reliable, high-speed Internet connection. And that is exactly what Jongerden landed when – after a review of all available telecommunications services in the area – he chose TWCBC as the data provider for the Portland Fish Exchange.

Jongerden gets all of the bandwidth he needs by connecting the Exchange’s terminal server, which operates via a password-protected virtual private network (VPN), to TWCBC’s wholly-owned hybrid-fiber coaxial (HFC) network. As a result, the dozens of registered buyers are able to access the computerized, real-time auction tracking system that displays up-to-the-minute information.

With the click of a mouse, they enter orders and buy that day’s supply of fresh whole cod, haddock and flounder on behalf of seafood distributors, supermarkets and restaurants throughout the region. According to Jongerden, up to 16,000 transactions can take place during each day’s auction, so network reliability is essential.

“The auction happens rapidly so there is nothing more important than the Internet connection,” Jongerden emphasized. “We went with Time Warner Cable because we knew they have a very reliable network.”

While the online auction has transformed the Portland Fish Exchange, and most of its buyers, Jongerden said that he still has a few buyers who still show up onsite for the auction.

“They like to inspect the fish, socialize and enjoy their lunch during the noon-time auction,” he said. “Some habits are hard to change.”

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PORTLAND FISH EXCHANGE

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Time Warner Cable Business Class, a division of Time Warner Cable (NYSE: TWC), offers a full complement of business communications tools to small- and medium-sized businesses and enterprise-sized companies. Its data, voice, video and security solutions are enhanced by award-winning customer service and local support teams. Time Warner Cable Business Class was founded in 1998, offering high-speed Internet service as Road Runner Business Class. Today, it serves more than 290,000 business customers in Time Warner Cable’s 23 divisions.

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