Hardware reviews

Intertex IX66 ADSL Router/Gateway

David Dorn changes his Alcatel Frog for a network-based router and is very impressed.

Don't get me wrong – Alcatel's frog – the standard kit for USB connected ADSL setups in the UK – is a fine piece of kit, for what it is. But it is, effectively, only a means to get connected. On top of the frog, you need a firewall of some description (an ADSL line is open all the time, and IP addresses tend not to change that much over time), and if you're running a small network, you'll need to set up Internet Connection Sharing as well.

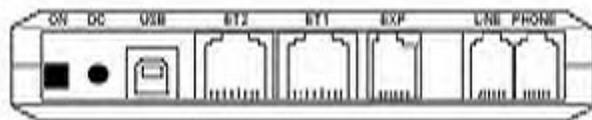| Info	
Product	IX66 ADSL Gateway
From	Intertex
UK Sourcing	www.eliteukserve.net
	www.dsl-warehouse.co.uk
	www.broadband.host-it.co.uk
	www.rpsdataproducts.co.uk
	www.505.co.uk
Price	£270 incl VAT
Rating	9/10
We Like	Very cabable everything-in-a one box DSL solution.

The IX66, though, gets rid of all of that – not only is it an ADSL modem, it's also a sharing device for a network, has a built-in firewall that is highly configurable, does Network

Address Translation (NAT) and all manner of other things that are highly desirable for anyone looking to get high-speed Internet access for their home networks.

Setting up.

Out of the box, there's not a great deal to do – you will need to supply to the firmware your ISP's details, your ID and password for your service and that's pretty much it. The software inside the box caters for loads of named services, but, generally, in the UK, you'd pick the BT settings, since they cater for not only BT's own service, but are also fine for 99% of the UK ISPs, including AOL.

In order to get the information into the router, of course, you need to connect it all up and supply some power from the ubiquitous wall-wart power supply. Even if you're not intending to use the networking features, you can connect your PC via the in-built USB interface, which is presented alongside the two Ethernet ports (one of which can be used for a DMZ – a demilitarised zone that you can put a web server on, and firewall it separately). There's also the line connection to make, and a port for your telephone lines – it even contains a built-in ADSL splitter.

You communicate with the router itself via a Web interface – it's all very capably covered in the online documentation, and is easy to get to grips with. For a quick setup, the defaults work well enough, although if you've got a slightly more complex communications setup, there may be one or two tweaks you'll need to make. Again, all the settings are covered in the manual.

The firewall is fairly straightforward to set up at a trivial level – select a profile and go with it is the easy way, or you can get right down and dirty using stateful packet inspection – the full-control, heavy hands-on approach.

In Use

Intertex make a lot of the IX66 range's ability to implement SIP – a chat and messaging protocol - but I have to say that, being a

devout AOL IM user, SIP hasn't really entered into the equation for me. That aside, the unit has connected, and stayed connected with no unscheduled downtime of any description caused by the router itself.

One thing that is immediately noticeable is that the response time of the computer that was acting as the ICS gateway has improved considerably, since its processor is no longer being used to arbitrate the USB connection. I'm particularly impressed at the clarity of the LCD display panel, which, if you set it to, can tell you when you've got email, although you can achieve the same sort of thing from an email client being constantly connected. Of course, if your AOL client is always open, Joanna will announce any mail arrival with her usual dulcet tones.

What's really handy, of course, is that every PC on the home network can access the Internet more or less as a matter of course, without the need to set up strange and wonderful Internet Connection software which, even at the best of times, can cause its own problems – with the IX66, there's been a very easy transition – effectively plugging it in and letting it get on with it as far as client PCs are concerned.

Verdict

I'm really rather impressed by this unit. It's small, neat, unobtrusive, and just gets on with the job of providing Internet access without any fuss. It's got all the facilities anyone's likely to need, even going as far as having a smart card reader that will allow you to edit the SIM card from your mobile phone on the top model in the range. **Would I recommend it? Yes, I would, if you're looking to share an ADSL connection – and you can't say fairer than that, really!**

David Dorn