

(Archive from Nov 1997 - for historic interest. Comment: It is all accelerating - making the doubling of computer power every 18 months look like solid lumps of unchanging rock. Take a mobile phone working in 2000 at 9.6k per sec. In less than two years they will be offering up to 2,000k per sec. That's a mega-jump!)

By the year 2000, half of all US homes will have two or more lines. One reason is home-working, a factor in 39 million homes. Most home workers are self employed but 8.5 million work at home for companies. These links are likely to dominate Internet [communication](#) ^s for years to come as technology enables more data to be compressed down them at high speed.

Ordinary lines will carry as much data as cable soon

In the US, the numbers connecting at 28.8kbps increased from 27% to 39% in six months. Many still have slower modems. If anyone had suggested in late 1995 that modems would soon deliver the same speed as ISDN, they would have been disbelieved by most people. However, on 16 October 1996, US Robotics announced a key breakthrough (v2) allowing modems to run twice as fast as before on ordinary telephone lines.

However, all this could be swept away: British Telecom has just announced an invention to transmit as much data as cable down two conventional copper wires. The system will cost £400 and will be available in two years. BT will be able to transmit live TV to all those with ordinary telephone lines - a possibility prevented only by a legal ban imposed to protect cable companies. So BT will transmit recorded films on demand instead. ATM technology has of course been well established for some years. Transmitting up to 155 megabits per second down copper wires.

ISDN lines could become obsolete before even established widely. ISDN has always been seen as the next step up for companies and wealthy individuals. However as we have seen, ISDN is likely to be overtaken in two or three years by faster telephone links or cable perhaps, despite the halving in price of ISDN boards in September 1996, to almost the same as a modem.

Cable modems promise vast capacity for video and sound. Cable has a theoretical upper speed of 10,000kbps (10mbps) - 80 times faster than ISDN, 700 times faster than a 14.4kbps modem which was the standard up until 1995.

By 2000, it is expected that 9 million in the US will own cable modems, yielding \$1.3 billion in earnings for the cable industry. Motorola is already reported to be preparing to ship one million cable modems to companies such as Time Warner, TCI and Comcast.