

7 The Elgin County Market

7.1 The Process

William Dodds & Associates Inc., (WD&A), was engaged to survey the market for high-speed telecommunications in St. Thomas and Elgin County . This section will outline steps in the process used and highlight the key findings. The complete survey material and summary findings can be found in Attachments #2 and # 3.

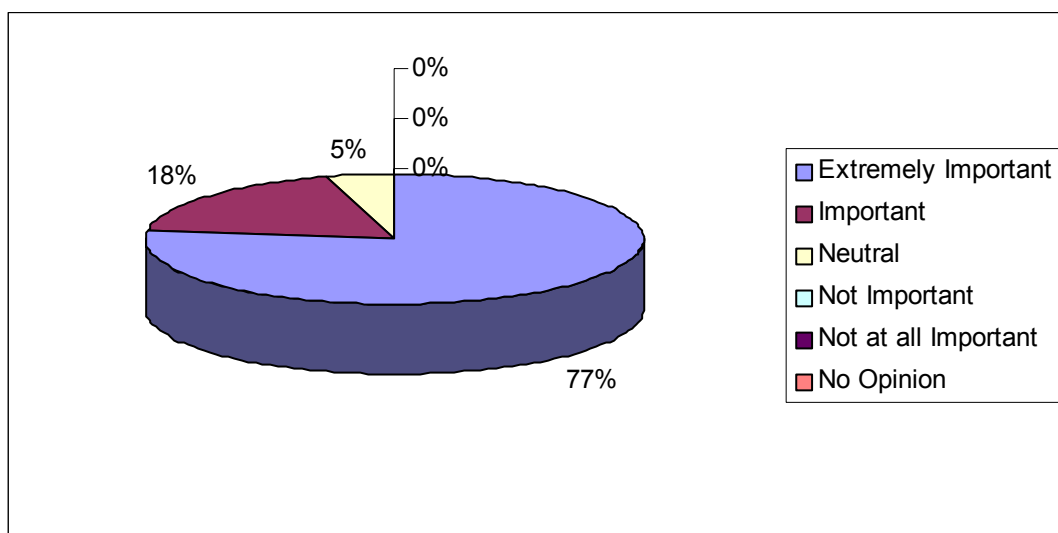
7.2 The Information Session

The first step in the market survey process was holding an information session for interested business leaders in the community. With the support of STESI and elginconnects, this session was held on October 11, 2001. Twenty-four members of the St Thomas and Elgin County business community attended.

During the information session, a telecommunications survey was handed out to attendees. Twenty-three responses were received. The survey and a summary of the responses can be found in Attachment # 2. The following are the key findings:

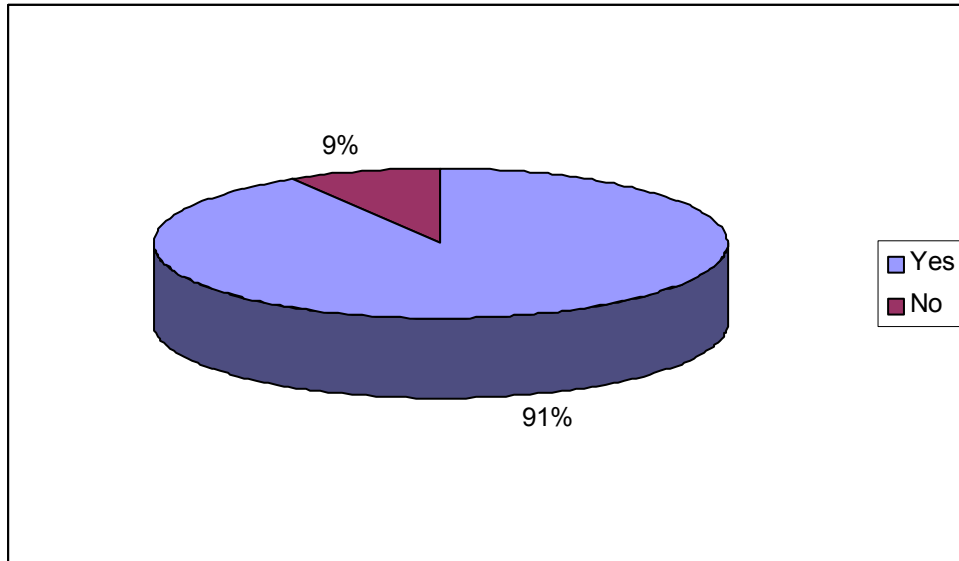
How important are telecommunications, (voice, data, Internet etc.), services in meeting your business goals?

	Extremely Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	Not at all Important	No Opinion
Responses	17	4	1	0	0	0



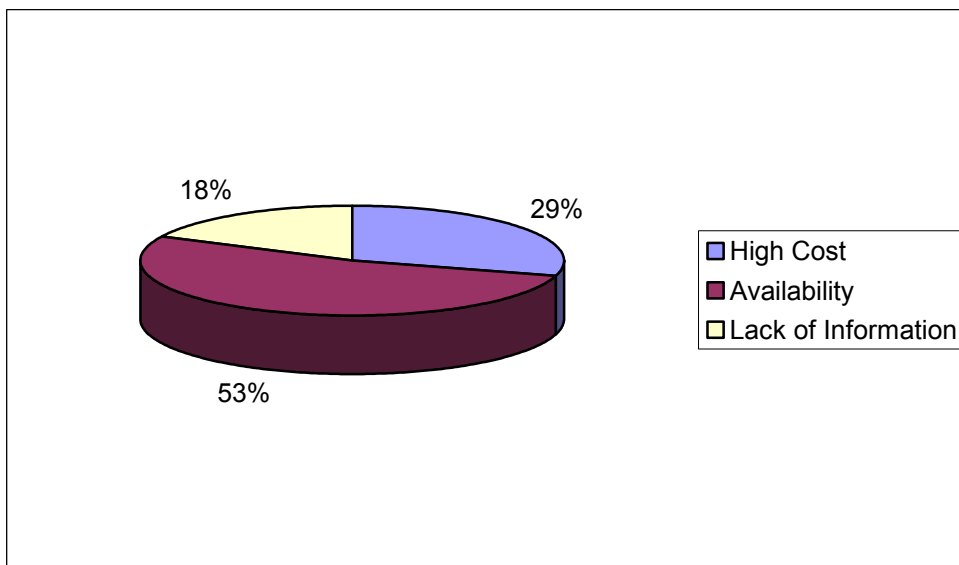
In the past year has your firm faced any barriers in obtaining necessary telecommunications services to meet your business needs?

	Yes	No
Responses	21	2



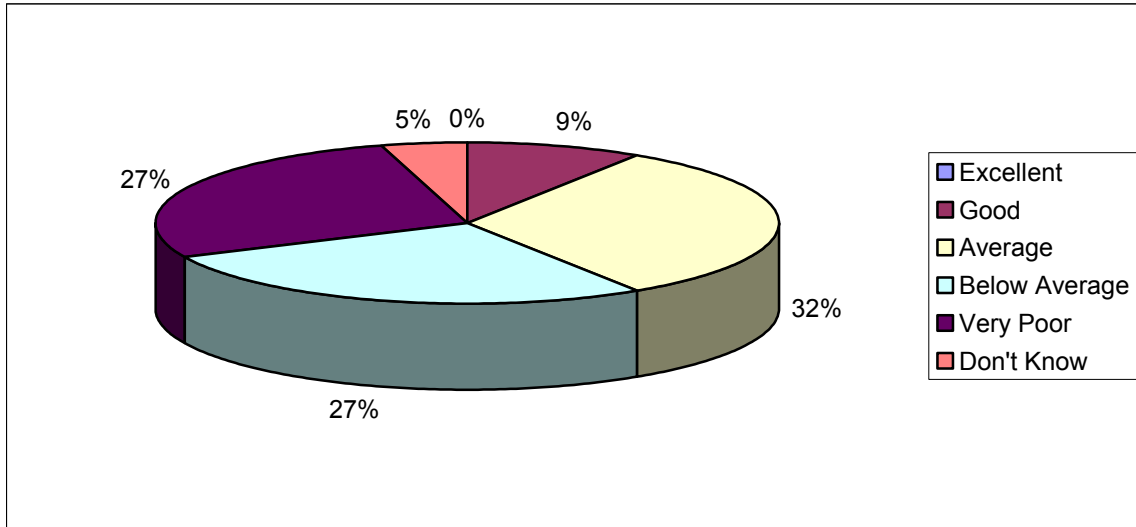
If you selected "Yes", identify the barrier(s).

High Cost	10
Availability	18
Lack of Information	6



Based on your firm's projected telecommunications needs over the next two years, how would you rate this community's existing communications infrastructure in meeting those needs?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Very Poor	Don't Know
Responses	0	2	7	6	6	1



The interest shown during the information session and responses to the survey were positive. In particular, there was a definite interest in high-speed telecommunications and a willingness to engage with new entrants in that market.

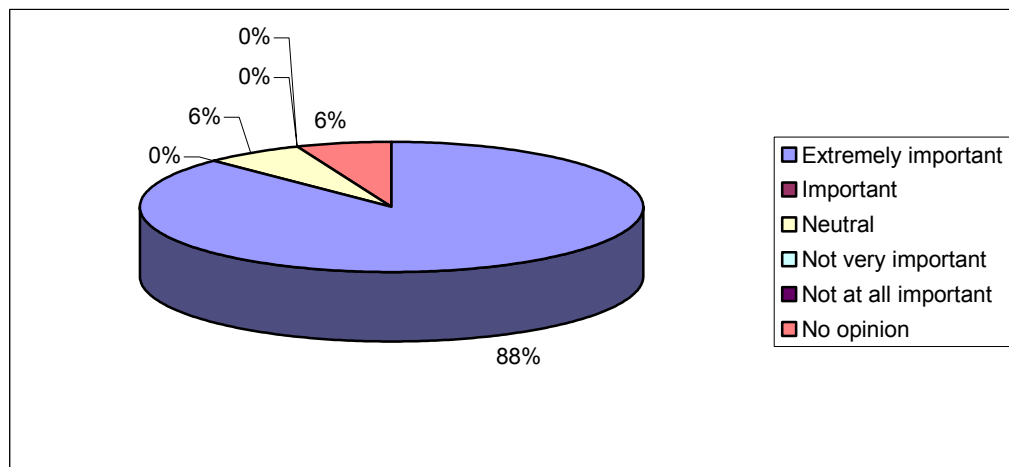
7.3 The Survey and Interviews

A market survey was prepared and sent out to the management of thirty-two targeted companies in St. Thomas and Elgin County. Interviews were conducted with eight of these companies. A total of sixteen responses were received. The summary of the responses can be found in Attachment # 3. The key findings of the mailout are below:

How important are telecommunications services in meeting your business goals?

Ranking	Response Frequency	Percent
Extremely important	14	88%
Important	0	0%
Neutral	1	6%
Not very important	0	0%
Not at all important	0	0%
No opinion	1	6%
Total	16	100%

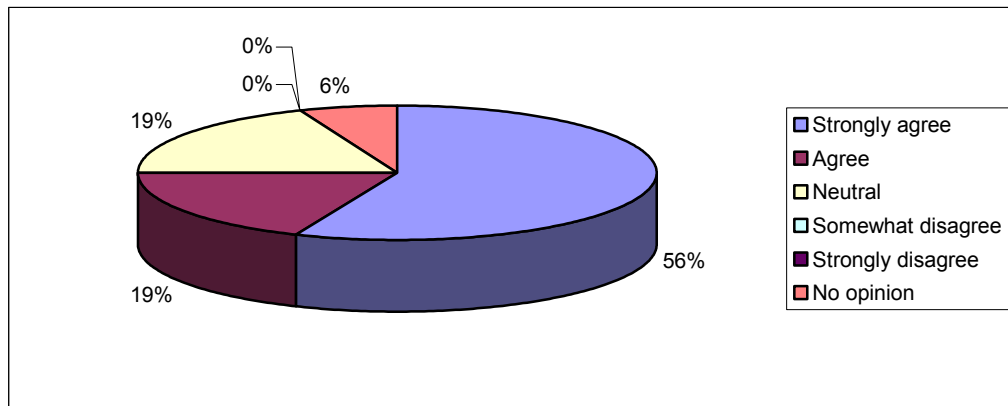
For the majority of customers surveyed telecom is a critical factor in their business with all but 2 indicating telecom is important or extremely important.



“In our industry telecommunications can provide a competitive advantage”.

Ranking	Response Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	9	56%
Agree	3	19%
Neutral	3	19%
Somewhat disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
No opinion	1	6%
Total	16	100%

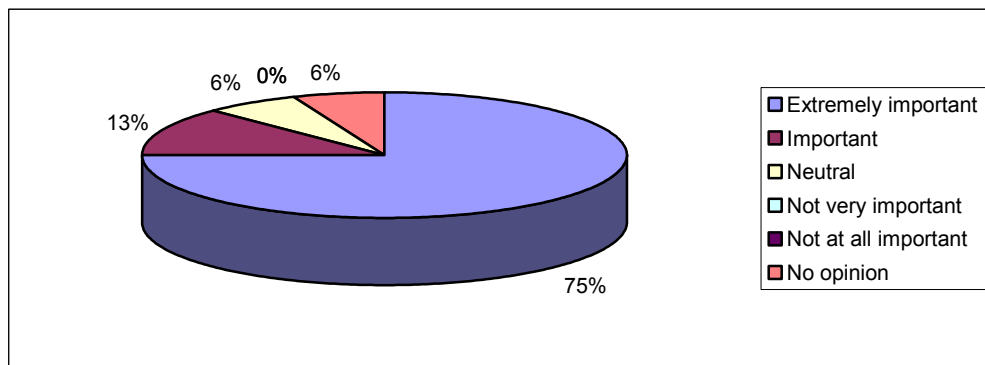
75% of respondents agree or strongly agree that telecom can give their business a distinct advantage.



How would you rank the Internet in terms of importance to your firm?

Ranking	Response Frequency	Percent
Extremely important	12	75%
Important	2	13%
Neutral	1	6%
Not very important	0	0%
Not at all important	0	0%
No opinion	1	6%
Total	16	100%

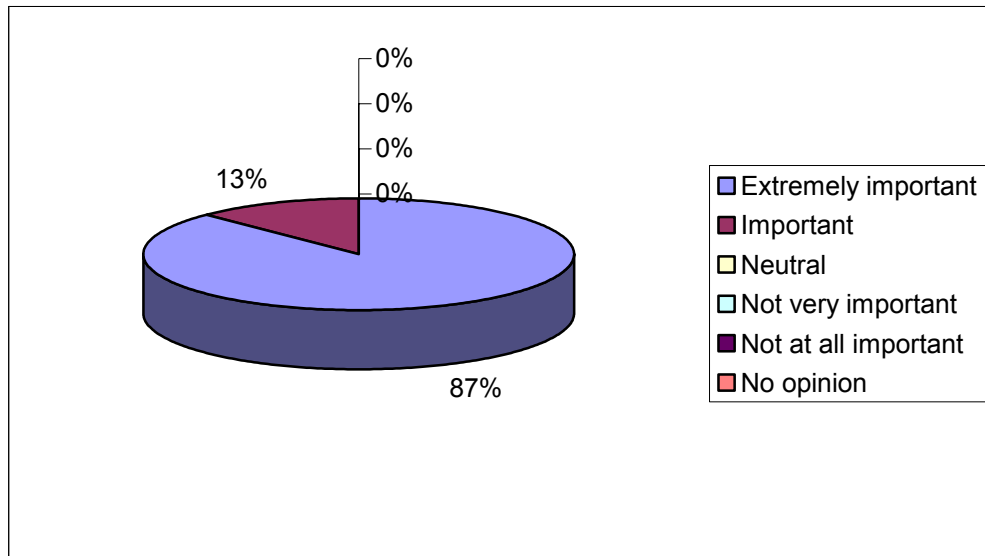
Internet services are one of the fastest growing technologies for business today.



From a business perspective, how would you rank access to higher speed services in importance to your firm when selecting a provider of communication services?

Ranking	Response Frequency	Percent
Extremely important	14	88%
Important	2	13%
Neutral	0	0%
Not very important	0	0%
Not at all important	0	0%
No opinion	0	0%
Total	16	100%

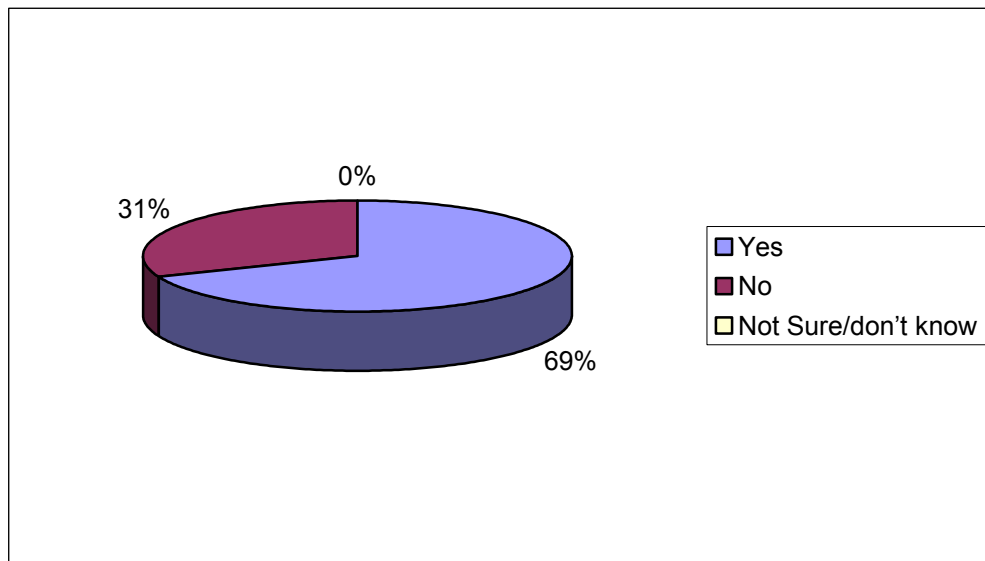
Clearly respondents are looking for higher speed services.



In the past 6 months to a year has your firm faced any barriers in obtaining necessary telecommunications services to meet your business needs?

Ranking	Response Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	69%
No	5	31%
Not Sure/don't know	0	0%
Total	16	100%

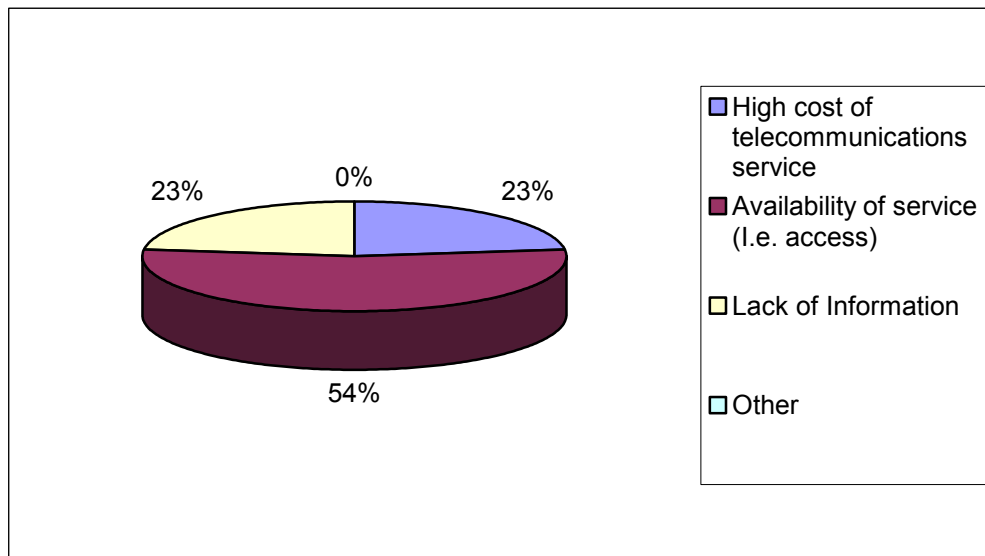
A significant number, (69%), of respondents have recently experienced barriers in obtaining necessary telecommunications services.



If you selected “yes”, identify the barrier(s).

Ranking	Response Frequency	Percent
High cost of telecommunications service	3	23%
Availability of service (l.e. access)	7	54%
Lack of Information	3	23%
Other	0	0%
Total	13	100%

Respondents were allowed to make multiple selections. The primary barrier appears to be a lack of services.



The following conclusions can be drawn from the responses to the survey:

- Telecommunications are very important to businesses in St. Thomas.
- Some businesses have experienced barriers in accessing the telecommunication services they need in St. Thomas.
- High cost of telecommunications remains a concern of most businesses.
- There is a significant interest and perceived need for higher speed telecommunications and in new products and services.