Virtual Private Network (VPN) Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is a Virtual Private Network (VPN)?
A: A VPN supplies private network connectivity over a long physical distance such as the Internet. Companies typically set up VPNs to allow workers to connect to the corporate network from their homes or remote offices. In this respect, a VPN is a form of Wide Area Network (WAN). VPNs enable file sharing, video conferencing and similar network services. VPNs typically use encryption to create private "tunnel" across the public internet.
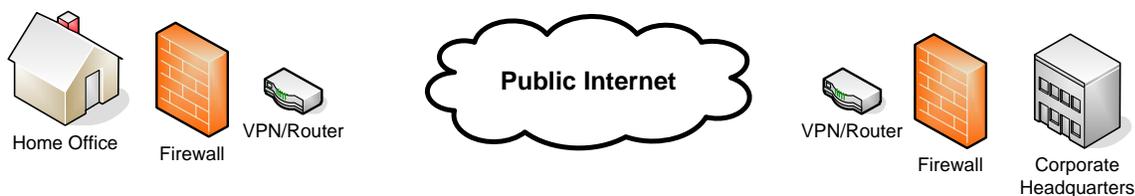
Q: Does ServiceCEO work with a VPN?
A: It depends on the speed of your Wide Area Network, the type of router/firewall/VPN appliance you are using and how you are using ServiceCEO. Setting up a successful VPN is a complex undertaking that should be performed by a networking professional.

Q: Can the Insight Direct Technical Support Team troubleshoot VPN problems with ServiceCEO?
A: Troubleshooting VPN issues is beyond the scope of the Insight Direct Technical Support team's responsibilities. We recommend you hire a network professional to set up your VPN. Once the VPN is working correctly, we can assist you with making ServiceCEO work correctly across the VPN.

Q: How can I tell if there is a problem is with my VPN or with ServiceCEO?
A: The first step is to verify VPN and WAN are working correctly. This involves testing the speed of the network connection to the WAN. You need to test the WAN network for latency and packet loss using ping and tracert commands. For more information on diagnosing network issues please review: http://support.insightdirect.com/help/serviceceo.htm#im/network_config/tbleshtnetwkconfig.htm If you don't know how to perform theses basic network tests you will need to contact a networking professional. Once you have verified the VPN is working properly you can begin to test your database connectivity across the WAN. The Insight Technical Support team can assist with these tests.

Q: What is the minimum WAN speed that ServiceCEO will work with?
A: The connection must be a minimum of 1.5 Megabits per second (Mbps) in both VPN network endpoints. Keep in mind, most cable ISPs only offer 380 kbps upload speed which is inadequate for running ServiceCEO across a WAN. For a VPN we recommend setting up a fast DSL connection or T-1 line.

Q: How can I test the speed of my internet connection?
A: There are several public websites that offer network connection speed tests. For example, www.speakeasy.net and http://www.naisg.org/Bandwidth/default.htm offer good network speed tests.

Q: Why does ServiceCEO need a fast WAN connection?
A: ServiceCEO uses an ODBC connection to the database. ODBC is optimized for Local Area Networks (LAN) and not WANs. Consequently slow network speeds can have a severe impact on processing data between the client and the server. With a slow connection, database transactions can get hung and users with slow connections can end up locking up tables in the database.

Q: Are there situations where a VPN will not work well?
A: Yes, if you use ServiceCEO with QuickBooks across a WAN/VPN, you may experience significant delays in synchronizing the data with QuickBooks. According to the official QuickBooks documentation, QuickBooks is not supported across a WAN.

Q: How does the router/firewall/VPN appliance affect the performance of ServiceCEO over a VPN?
A: VPNs use encryption to send data over the public internet. IPSec encryption requires computing power. Cheap router/firewall/VPN appliances don't have a lot of computing power. To have a fast VPN you need a hardware co-processor in the VPN/Firewall appliance to speed up the encryption.

Q: How can I find a qualified network professional to setup a VPN?
A: There are several vendors that offer this service – one example is Geeksquad. However, we recommend asking fellow business associates for a referral to a local PC networking expert. We also recommend you verify references and make sure that these references reflect work similar to the work you need performed.

Q: What is the best way to speed up a WAN/VPN?
A: Purchase as much bandwidth as you can afford and a Firewall/VPN appliance that has high throughput. Cisco and Sonicwall makes some excellent VPN appliances firewalls that range from $400 to $2,000 depending upon the model. The more expensive models tend to have higher VPN throughput.

Q: Are the alternatives to a VPN?
A: Yes. You can set up a Windows 2003 Server running Terminal Services and install ServiceCEO on this server. Terminal Services is designed and optimized for WAN's. However, setting up ServiceCEO on a Terminal Server is complex and requires expertise in configuring Terminal Services. We recommend hiring an expert/consultant in Microsoft Terminal Services if you plan on installing ServiceCEO on a Terminal Server. Please review our Terminal Services Best Practices deployment whitepaper: http://ws4.insightdirect.com/download/website/docs/whitepapers/terminalservices_bestpractices.pdf You can also use a product like Go to My PC in situations where budgets are tight.