

VOICE-OVER-INTERNET PHONE SYSTEMS

ARE BURSTING WITH BUSINESS BENEFITS



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What are Voice-over-Internet phone systems (aka, VoIP)?

Your company needs high-performance telecom to succeed. Without it, prospects can't contact you easily, customer service suffers, and employee collaboration breaks down. And in today's fast-paced, highly-competitive business environment, these aren't the kinds of things you can afford.

Fortunately, you can keep such problems at bay and gain an edge on the competition with the right kind of phone system, and the right kind of phone system is something called VoIP. It stands for Voice-over-Internet-Protocol, and it's the new paradigm in small-business telecom because of its breadth of productivity-enhancing features and its cost-effectiveness.

For the record, VoIP is not a brand name or a company. It is a type of telecom platform engineered for the dynamic, mobile workforces of the Internet age, with efficiency, mobility, and easy connectivity in mind.

VoIP may seem vastly different than POTS -- the Plain Old Telephone Service with hard-wired analog signalling that most businesses still use -- but voice-over-Internet digital signalling delivers high-quality sound in a system that looks and feels professional.

But perhaps the best part is that VoIP not only delivers quality and professionalism, but it does so for a low price.

So, when presented with an affordable, flexible, feature-rich phone system loaded with cutting-edge functionality like voicemail-to-email transcription, "transfer anywhere" call routing, and the ability to add new users on the fly, the question we ask businesses still using traditional phone systems is this: What are you waiting for?





Upgrading from traditional phones to VoIP

Switching from a traditional phone system to a Voice-over-Internet one is pretty simple. This is particularly true given the fact that most VoIP migrations can be done for you by your local IT services firm or telecom provider.

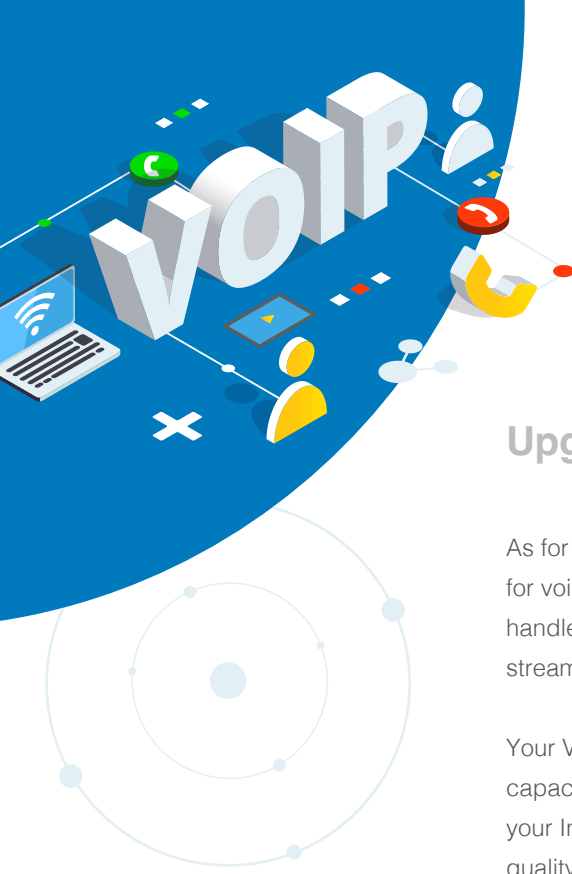
The first thing your VoIP partner will do is evaluate your current phone system and how your network is set up in order to provide a detailed “VoIP readiness” assessment. This should come with no strings attached -- it does for all of our potential new VoIP customers -- and will outline what, if anything, your company needs to do to install and operate a VoIP system.

This initial assessment will outline two critical factors pertaining to your IT network. The first is whether you have enough bandwidth to handle a full-featured VoIP system, and second is whether it will be capable of supporting a protocol commonly referred to as SIP.

Don't worry if you've never heard of SIP before. It's just an industry term for a protocol that ensures your slick new VoIP system will play nice with POTS systems when the two have to connect to each other.

In other words, SIP will allow your employees to make calls to, and receive calls from, both traditional landline phone systems and other VoIP systems. Your VoIP provider will make sure your network is compatible with SIP, and they'll set everything up once it's time to make the switch from POTS to VoIP.





Upgrading from traditional phones to VoIP

As for the bandwidth considerations, since VoIP uses your Internet connection for voice communications, you need to make sure there's enough capacity to handle all that plus all the usual email traffic, uploading & downloading of files, streaming videos, and web surfing.

Your VoIP provider will handle this too. So, if your current Internet bandwidth capacity isn't enough to handle all of VoIP's great features, they will work with your Internet Service Provider to get you upgraded and optimized so the call quality is crisp and clear and the image quality during video conferences is too.

Once your SIP and bandwidth readiness have been established, the only thing left to do during the evaluation stage is assess your existing telephones and any other hardware needed for a successful VoIP implementation, like headsets, speakers, and video cams.

Here your VoIP provider will help as well, as they'll have a wealth of experience transitioning businesses from traditional desktop phones to "softphones," which are simple software applications that allow users to make and receive calls from their computers.

At that point, it will be time to discuss VoIP's array of productivity-enhancing features and business benefits.





VoIP's key features & benefits for businesses

Your phone system may not be the most stimulating aspect of your business, and if you're like most small-business owners, you'd be just fine not having to talk about it. Because if you *are* talking about it, it's probably because it is lacking in some way.

One thing about VoIP systems is that they don't lack for anything when it comes to their features and functionality. Of course, they include all the standard calling and messaging capabilities of your traditional phone system, but almost all of them go far beyond the basics.

Voicemail is a perfect example. Once upon a time, it was ahead of its time and gave those businesses fortunate enough to have it a serious advantage over others stuck in the doldrums of missed calls and missed opportunities. But nowadays, voicemail is just another standard feature that hasn't evolved much beyond its original purpose.

On the other hand, today's VoIP systems allow you to do something quite remarkable with recorded messages. You can transfer them from your phone system to email inboxes or chat apps you can listen to while on the go, but what's really cool is they can be transcribed and transferred as text files to be read instead of listened to!

Another regular feature most every phone system offers is **Call Routing**, which allows incoming calls to be distributed to employees according to variables like extension number, department, language preference, and availability. But only a VoIP system can route calls using "Find me / Follow me" functions.

Those are actually two separate features: One lets individual users receive calls on a specific mobile device instead of at their desk, and another allows them to receive calls on a "virtual number" programmed to ring in multiple locations either simultaneously or in sequence. Say goodbye to missed calls forever!

How about when new users join your company and they need to be added to the phone system? With a traditional POTS setup, you'll be required to rewire your PBX patch panel (don't ask!) and almost certainly contact the phone company to flip the right switch. But with VoIP, it's really just as simple as bringing up your VoIP dashboard on your computer and clicking "add user."

When you're having your initial consultation with a VoIP provider and they mention something like "**Simple Scalability**," they're talking about the ease with which you can add users and the hassles you will avoid.





Valuable tasks only possible with VoIP

Many businesses still using landline phone systems today are doing so because they think over-the-Internet calling can't achieve the same quality as dedicated phone lines. But the reality is, network technology today enables VoIP call quality at least equal to landline systems, and in many cases even better.

Another common reason people hesitate to replace their old phones with modern ones is because they're wary of potential technical issues. But this too is unfounded, as VoIP only requires that initial readiness assessment and then the sort of basic management that your other software programs do -- because, remember, the bulk of what VoIP systems do is handled by an application and an Internet connection.

So if you're unsure about switching because you fear decreased quality or increased maintenance, you can rest easy and turn your attention to the way these fantastic features can enhance your business's overall telecom experience, for both internal and external customers.

Remote Management

If your small business is like ours, you don't have the time or resources to tinker with your phone system on a regular basis. Thankfully, VoIP systems can be supported remotely, so you can hand off management of your system to a provider that handles everything over the Internet.

This ability to outsource one's phone system maintenance is often the deciding factor for businesses that make the switch. They love the idea that they'll no longer have to deal with a behemoth phone company and antiquated technology every time they have a technical issue or need to add new users.

Call Conferencing

VoIP's call conferencing functions are truly state-of-the-art. And in the fast-paced Internet age when everyone is constantly connected -- and therefore able to meet in a virtual space at any time -- reliable, on-demand conferencing is a real nice benefit.

Employees, colleagues, and customers can have online meetings with crisp, clear video using their desktop phones, their softphones, or their mobile devices. And thanks to VoIP software's simplicity, organizing conference calls, inviting attendees, sharing files "in-call," and recording the proceedings for absentees can all be handled right from your office computer or smartphone.





Voicemail-to-Email

As mentioned previously, the Voicemail-to-Email feature can accomplish two things. It can refer to the more traditional usage where voice messages left on users' extensions can be transferred out to their emails for easy access; or, it can refer to something much more advanced.

Namely, VoIP phone systems have a function that transcribes voicemails into text files to be shared as email attachments or even as SMS messages and through chat apps.

The advantages here are twofold: First, it eliminates situations where a message can't be heard due to noise or garbled recording, and second, it makes forwarding information easier and more reliable -- no more replaying a voice message over and over when you can simply copy-and-paste what was said.

Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR)

This is another one feature, like voicemail, that every phone system has, but which VoIP has taken to a new level. Since they're just another software application, and since they can be integrated with your other applications, VoIP allows you to set up menus with more fine-grained options for callers.

Aside from automating your inbound customer service scheme and presenting callers with a modern system that screams professionalism, you'll really be able to personalize your greetings. This can be the difference between a merely satisfied customer and one who actually notices that you care.

VoIP's IVR capabilities make caring for customers customizable, in that when one calls into your phone system, there's not a one-size-fits-all menu of options awaiting them. Instead, they can be routed quickly and accurately to the right personnel based on a variety of criteria derived from your accounting, CRM, and supply chain applications and stored inside your VoIP system.

Call Detail Analytics

One way to evaluate your IVR, and various personnel inside your company, is to take a look at the numbers. Your VoIP dashboard will allow you to run reports on a range of call-detail data including call duration, call resolution rate, customer satisfaction, and more.

You can leverage this data to better understand if your IVRs are set up right, if your agents are performing up to productivity standards, which scripts are working best, and even if your VoIP settings and bandwidth are optimized for voice quality and latency.

These are the kinds of answers that help business owners improve operational efficiency -- and it can all come from your phone system!



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Switch to VoIP today!

Switching from a POTS to a modern VoIP system does more than save money and give your business a modern sheen in the eyes of customers. The focus really should be on all those great features and benefits that help small- and mid-sized businesses succeed.

Whatever your traditional landline system can do, VoIP can do better, so there's really no reason not to switch at this point. Or, if your business already uses a VoIP system but it's not quite doing the trick, it may be that your provider isn't the right fit.

In either case, we'd welcome the opportunity to serve you with a VoIP readiness assessment and a free consultation, and we'll ask just one more time: What are you waiting for?

Are you ready for the business benefits of a VoIP phone system?

GET YOUR FREE CONSULTATION TODAY!

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