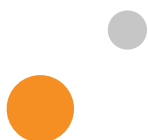




Buyer's Guide

Choosing the Right Cloud Communications Solution for your Business



Introduction

For businesses still using traditional PBX solutions for your business telephony, it could be worth taking a look at Cloud solution. As hosted telephony is stored in the Cloud rather than on your premises, gone is the need for messy wires and clunky infrastructure.

Rather than using physical handsets, the system is accessed through a PC or laptop connected to a headset. Calls are made via your broadband connection rather than traditional copper wire based systems.

One of the biggest advantages of Cloud-based telephony is the adaptability it offers, allowing you to manage your whole business' communications, across multiple locations globally, from an easy-to-use operating system.

Cloud-based telephony is changing the way we work, the way we communicate with our People and talk to our Customers.

How to Use the Guide?

This Guide is designed to help you choose the right Cloud phone system for your business so that you don't end up with regrets – we want your business to invest in the right solution. We will look at all the features and capabilities you should consider when evaluating your Cloud Voice purchase. We'll look at all the solutions and walk you through the benefits.



Which Organisations Are Choosing Cloud Voice Systems and Why?

A virtual PBX — also known as Hosted Voice or Cloud Voice — will only run internal calls through the Internet, so companies that don't make a lot of external calls find them attractive. For businesses that only need to use a few calling features like voicemail and hold music, a Cloud Voice phone system may be the best solution.

One of the main reasons why businesses are moving to a Cloud Voice phone system is through necessity. [By 2025 BT will have switched off its legacy ISDN network, and in 2020 it will have stopped supporting it.](#) Businesses will need to find a new solution that suits their evolving business needs.

Comparing Hosted Voice Solutions

We'll go into detail later about why Cloud phone systems are great, but here is a snapshot of the benefits you will receive over traditional phone systems:

- Little or no initial setup costs
- Low monthly service costs
- Extra lines are easy to add
- Includes upgrades and new features
- Incorporates extended features, such as conferencing
- Low maintenance costs
- Easy to select and cancel virtual numbers
- Expansions may result in complicated projects
- No need for a technician for upgrades or software patches

Why Choose Hosted Voice?

Many businesses choose a Cloud Voice system for one or more of the following reasons:



Functionality

The system can be as basic or complex as you need. With the out-of-the-box functions that come with Cloud Voice, you can start operating within the same realms of systems usually only traditionally available to the budgets of large corporate firms. If you want call queues with customised welcome messages and hold music, it's already right there.

Conferencing is also included. Too many businesses employ expensive third-party dial-in services, so you can start saving money straight away. By removing these costs, the system virtually pays for itself from the outset.



Flexibility

Progressive employers are increasingly promoting flexible and remote working and modern business practices are continually moving towards an always switched on and available customer experience. With Hosted Voice, your people can work from anywhere, any time. Mobile workers with the app can be connected on their extension with all calls routed through the Internet. This not only provides flexibility but also significant cost savings and productivity.

The ability to route incoming calls to any destination can also open up new service areas and markets that historically may have been unavailable. The global expansion of Cloud telephony enables co-workers, suppliers and customers to communicate over one system at low cost.



Security

Calls within the system have their own propriety levels of security, with the ability to enable end to end encryption if required. Fraud checks against unusual activity are running 24x7x365 so in the event that anything suspicious appears to be happening – for example calls to expensive locations or premium rate numbers – the system will automatically lock down, suspend services and issue an automated notification. At user levels, individual extensions can be locked down to varying levels to keep control of what people do, to provide extra peace of mind.

With Hosted Voice, your supplier is in control of your system's security. So you can relax. Chess has disaster recovery plans and physical security in our data centre to make sure that you are protected all the time.

And if something does go wrong, the data will be rerouted to another part of the system, so your customers won't notice any interruption.



Reliability

With a fully-resilient infrastructure in place across two data centres and multiple carriers for voice breakout, reliability is a given. Operating with a high service level agreement, the system is constantly monitored and maintained by a highly-technical team on a 24/7. If there's an issue with the local Internet, you can take calls on mobile apps, which means you can have higher levels of uptime.

Traditionally, with an ISDN fault, all calls are routed to a single number (usually a mobile), but with Cloud Voice your people can operate as they usually would on a different device without customers noticing any difference.



Scalability

With traditional telephony systems and the financial outlay required, scalability within these platforms is always a rising cost. In today's competitive business world, businesses need to be more fast, efficient and agile than ever in their methods. With Cloud telephony, the ability to add and remove users on a regular basis brings forward this methodology in many ways.

Hosted solutions are designed for businesses of any size. Cloud solutions are normally only charged on a per-user-per-month basis, which means you only pay for what you need. Businesses can use the cloud as little or as much as they want. When your business grows, it grows with you.



Cost

One of the biggest benefits of employing a Cloud Voice system is the cost savings you'll make. There are no ongoing maintenance charges and virtually no installation charges.

Costs are fixed per user per month, so if you're planning a new venture or campaign that requires additional people, you will know exactly how much your communications costs will be. Many businesses, for example, run sales campaigns, which have associated seasonal highs and lows, so the ability to quickly add specific queues with users, monitor the activity, evaluate it and get a real-world ROI out of things is now easy to achieve within minutes rather than days or in some cases months.

Questions to Ask Cloud Voice Suppliers?

Here's a quick summary of what you should be looking for and questioning when looking for your Cloud Voice vendor.

Capability to look for	Description	Questions to ask your vendor
Mobile Phone Routing	Mobile phone app to route calls directly into your phone, allowing you to take/receive calls on the go, anywhere in the world (also known as the FMC Client)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can I take calls via any network connection? i.e. 3g/4g• Does the app always look for the cheapest connection i.e. wifi?• What are the full list of features available on the app?• Can I make internal calls?
Added Features	One of the greatest benefits of Cloud Voice is the huge array of added features included with the system. Before selecting your provider, just be sure to get an understanding of their features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do they offer basic features like conference calls, voicemail to email etc?• How easy is it to manage and set them up?• Do you receive new features when they become available?• Are updates free?
Costs	Cost saving is guaranteed with a Cloud Voice solution, just be sure to understand any hidden charges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the full breakdown of costs?• Are there maintenance, licensing, and upgrade costs?
Support	Great customer service is imperative, understanding your pre, during and after care is vital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is support included in the price, or is that extra, too?• What kind of support can you expect during setup?• Once you're up and running, who will take care of you?
Uptimes	Cloud Voice is more reliable than traditional phone systems. Just question your provider's plan B.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How many datacentres do they have?• Will they guarantee uptime?• Do they have any backup options if there's an Internet outage?

How Does Cloud Voice Weigh up Against Traditional on Premise?

To help outline the key benefits of Cloud Voice for your business, we have broken down the key features and how it weighs up against traditional phone systems.

Capability to look for	Cloud Voice	Traditional Telephony
Low initial cost and set-up cost	✓	✗
Low monthly service cost	✓	✗
Easy to add extra lines	✓	✗
Upgrades and new features are included	✓	✗
Extended features, like conference calls	✓	✗
Low maintenance costs	✓	✗
Picking and cancelling virtual numbers is easy and fast	✓	✗
Expansions may result in complicated projects	✗	✓
Loss of power or PBX system failure will result in paused business operations	✗	✓
Technician support required for upgrades and patches on software	✗	✓
Route calls into your mobile from anywhere in world	✓	✗

A Checklist for Buying Hosted Voice

Here's a quick summary of what you should be looking for and questioning when looking for your Cloud Voice vendor.

Research – Collect names of possible providers below

1.

2.

3.

Explore – Score vendors on a scale of 1 to 5 in each category.

Vendor names	Cost	Features	Scalability	Support	Reliability	Pre-Score	Post-Score	Total

Demo – Invite vendors to demonstrate their product

Your top 5 phone system needs (features, pain points)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Vendor Names		Integrations	
References		Training	
Past Deployments		Problems	

* Take notes on the categories. For Example: References: Yes Past Deployments: 2 mos. Integrations: Yes (Salesforce, Chrome) Training: Remote, on-site available Problems: extra charge for more than 10 voicemail boxes.

Purchase and Implement – Ask your Cloud Voice provider about deployment

How long will deployment take?

When is the go-live date?

Who should you contact with questions?

Is training remote or on-site?

What training resources are available?

Are there extra charges?

Conclusion

In summary, purchasing your cloud telephony solution should be a lot easier with the support of this guide.

When making your purchasing decision, be sure to remember:

- Costs
- Features
- Support

By considering the above, asking the questions we've outlined and using our checklist, your cloud telephony purchase should be smoother and successful for your business.

We hope you choose wisely!

We help you

Connect Your People

Contact Our Team

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