



MANAGED VOICE SOLUTIONS


Whitepaper

A small business has many priorities – things such as finding new customers, recruiting and retaining talented employees, keeping ahead of the competition and managing costs are a few that leap to mind. With so much on your mind, your phone system might be something that you haven't thought about in a while. If your business has been around for some time, perhaps you have a few phone lines that connect to a system like a key system or private branch exchange (PBX). It seems to do the job, but are there other alternatives out there that might help your business save money, be more productive, and improve the customer experience?

In a word, yes. For many years, phone systems with sophisticated features were only available to bigger businesses that had the capital to make a large up-front investment in equipment, then spend more money to customize a system to their specific business needs. However, with technologies such as Voice over IP (VoIP) and network or "cloud"-based services, an impressive array of capabilities is now available to small businesses. The best part is technology has not only increased capabilities, but dropped the price to a point where virtually any business can take advantage.

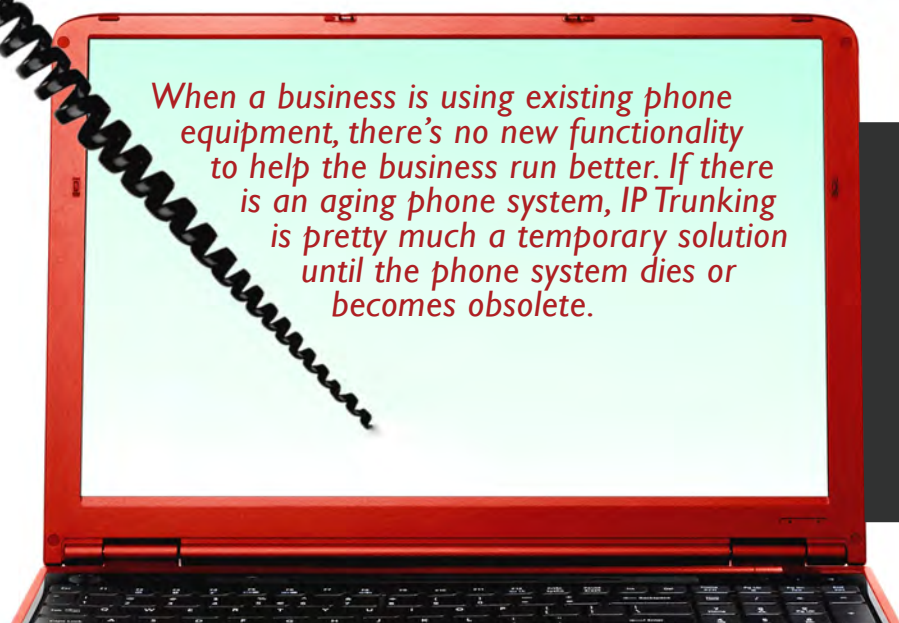
OPTIONS

Choosing the right technology can be daunting for any small business. You often find yourself wading through a sea of strange buzzwords and tech speak. This paper is designed to help you understand your options and make the best choice for your business.



There are three main types of products based on VoIP technology that are available to you.

- **IP Trunking/Integrated Acces:** these products allow you to continue to use your existing phone system, but use Internet Protocol (IP) – the same technology used to browse web sites, to drive cost savings.
- **IP PBX:** this is a modern variant of a traditional phone system that you purchase, install at your business location and manage yourself. It provides a great feature set but usually requires a capital investment to purchase the equipment, then a monthly fee for voice service.
- **Hosted IP-PBX:** this is a service that you purchase on a contract basis from a phone company. It also provides a great feature set but it is hosted in the cloud - that's tech speak for owned and managed by your service provider. You pay for the service monthly with little or no capital investment.



When a business is using existing phone equipment, there's no new functionality to help the business run better. If there is an aging phone system, IP Trunking is pretty much a temporary solution until the phone system dies or becomes obsolete.

IP

TRUNKING

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One of the simplest ways for a small business to switch to VoIP is IP Trunking. This solution allows a business to take advantage of the benefits of VoIP (potentially unlimited usage, a shared connection for voice and Internet) without replacing their existing phone system.

In an IP Trunking solution, voice and Internet, are generally carried over a single data circuit with part of the circuit used for voice, the other part for data. Because voice is very sensitive to delays, (just think about how annoying a conversation would be with one or two seconds in-between every back and forth) phone calls always take priority over Internet traffic like web browsing or email.

Benefits of IP Trunking include:

- **Cost Savings:** For many customers, the move from separate circuits for voice and data to a single, "integrated" circuit will deliver cost savings between 10-30%.
- **No Capital Costs:** These solutions allow businesses to use their existing phones and phone system so there are no upfront charges.
- **Predictable Operating Expense:** Monthly voice and data charges appear on one bill and in general have pretty predictable monthly costs. A small business will typically pay a fee based on how many concurrent phone calls they might make at any time. (A good rule of thumb to figure out how many concurrent phone calls your business might need is to take the number of phones in your business and divide by three). Long distance usage is either unlimited or a large pool of minutes.
- **No Maintenance Expenses:** Because there is no new equipment, there are no new costs associated with maintenance.

PURCHASING AN IP-PBX

Purchasing a new phone system is a logical step in improving your communications infrastructure. The vendors supplying Internet Protocol PBXs (IP-PBXs) can deliver an excellent experience for your employees and customers. However, you might be in for a little sticker shock. An IP-PBX is a capital purchase – it requires you to buy the phone system, new phones, and have it installed.

These purchases can easily add up to thousands of dollars (\$5,000-10,000 is not uncommon). Yes, that cost can be financed, but you need to consider whether you want to buy and eventually own a piece of depreciating equipment when other, less capital-intensive options exist.

Other considerations you might have when purchasing an IP-PBX are:

- **Obsolescence:** Like any other piece of equipment, an IP-PBX can quickly become outdated. An IP-PBX can be updated and upgraded, but it will cost money. And, eventually, just like with an old PC, there comes a time when upgrading isn't possible and you'll need to purchase a new one.
- **Business Continuity:** Since the IP-PBX will reside in your facility, anything that might happen in and around it – a power outage, a natural disaster, etc. – will affect your ability to send and receive calls.
- **Multiple Vendors:** The IP-PBX is manufactured by an equipment provider but generally supplied to a small business by a service provider or reseller. A service provider usually supplies Internet, voice lines and long distance. Because multiple vendors are involved, when problems arise it is often difficult to determine which vendor is responsible for troubleshooting and repair.

HOSTED IP-PBX – A PBX IN THE CLOUD

Hosted IP-PBX makes all of the features and capabilities of a best-in-class phone system available to you without the need for a big capital purchase. With Hosted PBX, the service provider owns, hosts, manages and updates the phone system in their network. As a business, you do not have to worry about the expense, maintenance or other downsides to purchasing a physical phone system. Instead of that big up-front investment, you pay only for what you need.

Characteristics of Hosted IP-PBX are:

- **Low or No Capital Costs:** Since there is no equipment to purchase, the up-front costs are limited – and often these are included as part of your monthly bill.
- **Predictable Operating Expense:** Monthly voice and data charges are usually calculated on a per telephone basis. If you have 10 employees each with a telephone on their desk, your monthly operating cost will be 10 times a set fee. If you add people, you'll know exactly how your costs will increase.
- **No Maintenance Expenses:** Because the service provider owns the equipment, they are responsible of all the costs associated with equipment and software upgrades. Maintenance of any equipment in your facility is included in the service fee as well.
- **Business Continuity:** Since the phone system resides in a bullet proof, service provider owned facility with safeguards like back-up power and equipment, events at your location such as a power outage would not affect your business. You can simply and quickly configure the service to have the calls routed to an alternate number (such as another location, home, or mobile device) and business can proceed.
- **No Obsolescence:** The service provider hosting the system will routinely upgrade the service so that new enhancements are delivered on an ongoing basis at little or no cost.



Managed Voice Services is truly the last phone system you'll ever need. It delivers best-in-class capabilities at a price that's affordable for all. "Hosted" has a lot of advantages, namely low capital expenses, predictable billing, business continuity benefits, and no obsolescence.

BENEFITS

A bundled price for everything you need to run your business. Managed Voice Services is an all-inclusive product that includes everything you need to support the voice and data needs of your business. Included with the price of each "seat", or user, is:

- Full feature set plus a web portal to customize the business or employee experience
- Brand new Polycom IP phone
- Business-wide features such as Auto Attendant and Music on Hold
- Unlimited local calling
- Equipment and installation

MANAGED VOICE SERVICES FROM MEDIACOM BUSINESS

Mediacom Business is proud to make Managed Voice Services available to its customers. We see the future as one where businesses anywhere can reap greater performance benefits at a lower cost by moving to a cloud based solution. Managed Voice Services is a cloud-based IP-PBX that makes an incredible array of features and capabilities available at a fraction of the cost of an on-site phone system.

There are no hidden costs – you simply pay a flat rate per employee per month and that's it. As your business expands, you can simply add new users to your account. Have a remote employee? The power of Managed Voice Services enables you to put a phone virtually anywhere with an Internet connection and have it work seamlessly with the rest of your business.

Big Business Features. Managed Voice Services provides you all the features you need and then some. If you're on an older system today, you'll be thrilled with the functionality that's available in Managed Voice Services. Included are the features you'd expect – call transfer, voicemail, call forwarding, and the like.

However, what really makes Managed Voice Services exciting are capabilities such as:

- **Quick and Easy Customization** – an easy to use web portal enables you and your employees to easily customize their phone system experience to suit the way they do business.

Have an employee that's out of the office a lot of the day? With the click of a mouse, a user can take advantage of Managed Voice Services' powerful remote office capabilities to have their desk phone and mobile phone ring simultaneously, and have all their messages route to a single, unified voice mailbox.

Want to distribute inbound sales calls to a group of employees? Again, a click of a mouse in the web portal lets you set up a hunt group that can ring your sales team's phones simultaneously, in sequence, or in a specific pattern.

- **Auto Attendant and Music on Hold.** Auto Attendant ensures that your business is always available to your customers, even if you're not. During business hours, use the Auto Attendant to route calls to the appropriate department or answer routine questions. After hours, use Auto Attendant to take messages or route urgent calls to mobile devices or other phones. Music on hold gives your business the professional appearance you want by playing music, announcements (or both) while your customers are on hold. Best of all, that same web portal allows you to upload a new message anytime you'd like.
- **Customer Service.** Mediacom Business is located where you are. Should there ever be a question or problem, our trained staff will solve it to your satisfaction – quickly. Compare that to other providers in the area that serve customers with a call center in another state or even another country and you'll understand why local is better.
- **Voice Quality and Security.** Since Managed Voice Services is a service that's fully managed, we ensure a superior experience. This is not a product, like Vonage or others that use the commercial Internet to route voice calls so that some calls sound like a bad cell phone. With Managed Voice Services, end-to-end quality and security are assured. All calls are routed over Mediacom Business' managed network to give your calls highest priority.



CONCLUSION

There are a lot of options out there when looking at a phone system. It may seem like the status quo – no change – is the safest bet. However, the pace of technology has now made possible an impressive array of capabilities available to small business that was previously only available to larger ones. Now might be the right time to evaluate your needs and see if new capabilities might help your business be more productive. You might find you can make a big jump forward while spending pretty much what you're spending today or even saving money.

With Managed Voice Services, Mediacom Business is delivering a best-in-class phone system with no up-front costs that allows you to buy only what you need. We take care of all the details – phones, equipment, installation, training, and ongoing service – so you can focus on your business. Best of all: we're local – we're available around the clock to help solve any problems you might have.