

White Paper: VOIP

It's still good to talk.

Introduction

It's true to say that voice calls are still important for business, but the landscape has changed radically over the last decade – in the same way that TV has gone Digital (*factoid: the dis-used analogue signal from terrestrial TV days has been re-purposed to help improve mobile phone coverage!*) and also how there's no such thing as a "smart phone" anymore – even a £20 handset can send emails.

Underpinning all these revolutions is the evolution of connectivity. For voice related communications, the rise of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) is spelling the end of traditional telephony over BT lines, and even old style (GSM) mobile networks.

However it continues to develop, people will always need to talk. And so this White Paper will help explain some of the pros and cons of using VOIP, and share with you Ethical IT's experiences and lessons learnt deploying telephony solutions for our customers. Our goal is to give you a better understanding of what VOIP is, in non-technical terms, to help you make an informed decision whether or not to pursue it.



What is VOIP?

Put simply, VOIP means making or receiving phone calls using an internet connection rather than a phone line. Your phone call does not require thousands of local BT exchanges and copper wires all over the country, and because of that it's cheaper.

It also allows for a lot more functionality – work calls can be made or received via an App on your phone - and very sophisticated call routing, meaning you can take your number with you wherever you are in the world and appear as if you are at your desk. You just need an internet connection and you can receive calls on your laptop, mobile phone, Mac, PC, tablet or regular desk phone.

Benefits & reliability

Most clients have saved significant amounts of money by moving to a VOIP system, especially when combined with a mobile phone package. Call costs are much lower than anything offered by traditional phone line providers like BT, TalkTalk, Virgin etc. and this is especially true for international calls where the savings are extremely large.

There are other benefits too, such as the ability to take your number with you, for example from your desk phone to your mobile, so you never miss a call. Likewise, other features include seamless transfer of calls between employees no matter where they are, voicemails arriving as emails to your laptop or phone, and the ability to handle calls differently depending on your opening hours or bank holidays. The VOIP platform is almost infinitely customizable to your requirements and can evolve and grow with your business.

The most crucial piece of technology in any VOIP system is of course the internet connection, and this is where your biggest investment should be. The good news is that business internet lines (called Lease Lines – see our [Knowledgebase article on Internet Connections](#) for further info) have seen a drastic reduction in cost over the last 3 years, and the overall monthly cost of your package will still be less than the overall cost of traditional lines, phone system and calls. The internet connection also serves your PCs and other devices too, and nowadays carriers provide a 99.97% guarantee on up time

meaning the lines are extremely stable. On top of this, a cheaper secondary line can be installed using the old copper network, to provide a backup should the main line ever go down – providing you with an extremely resilient system.

Cost savings

Phone calls will typically be 40% cheaper than what you pay now, often more for international calls and calls to mobiles. There is no need to pay Line Rental as there are no lines, nor do you need to have an on-site phone system or server, as that is handled online too.

Every call is itemized and certain numbers can be blocked (e.g. premium 09 numbers), plus comprehensive call reporting to analyze call spend and patterns or staff performance are all features that traditional phone providers often charge extra for, but are included with VOIP system.

Finally, you can even do away with desk phones if you wish; staff can just have a mobile phone and use it for both personal calls they pay for themselves, and business calls via an App they install on their phones which connects to your company VOIP system, retaining their landline number.

What options are best for me?

There are hundreds of VOIP providers in the UK and each offer deals on various call packages and plans. Some providers may appear cheap but can be very unreliable, and others are simply too expensive to offer savings versus traditional telephony.

SynergyTech is a whole-of-market supplier meaning we are not tied to any one provider, and we constantly review the sector and only work with the best providers. We will discuss all the options with you based on your requirements, to help you chose the right plan. We will then proactively manage the account and give you all the support you need to take the hassle out of billing and reporting, plus any configuration changes you need for call handling.

Ease of Implementation/Migration

SynergyTech has been through VOIP implementations and migrations many times with our customers and can support the whole process end to end for your company. At the most basic level, the migration involves 4 stages:

1. Installing a robust and resilient internet connection to handle the calls
2. Rolling out the new phones to staff (be those mobiles, desk phones or a mixture)
3. Setting up call routing how you want it, e.g. caller menus and call queues or groups
4. Migrating your existing numbers over to the new system, usually within a 12 hour period

Step 1 should not be underestimated; having a good internet connection is critical to VOIP being a success, and investment in this connection is essential. SynergyTech can supply this and also implement a special router which will ensure calls are kept separate from your PCs and other data devices, to ensure 100% Quality of Service every time, plus a backup line should the main go down.

Consideration should also be given to remote working as part of the planning. With VOIP, you can give staff a home phone or an App for their mobile or laptop, which they simply plug into their home internet connection, to enable them to have a full office presence when working remotely.

Our Conclusions

Using VOIP for your company phone calls has the potential to offer very significant cost savings as well as a big upshift in functionality and collaboration within your company. This change will require some planning and support to achieve, and the internet connection you choose should not be scrimped on, however the benefits are far reaching and the overall impact will be very positive. Ethical IT and our partners have built up the experience and expertise to help you plan and deliver a migration to VOIP plus manage your company mobile phones, and we would welcome further discussion and questions.