

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT VoIP PHONE SYSTEM FOR YOUR MULTI-LOCATION OFFICE OR REMOTE WORKFORCE

NOT ALL VOIP SYSTEMS ARE CREATED EQUAL! READ THIS GUIDE TO DISCOVER HOW TO AVOID MAKING A FRUSTRATING, EXPENSIVE MISTAKE WHEN CHOOSING A VOIP PHONE SYSTEM

READ THIS REPORT TO DISCOVER:

- What VoIP is, how it works and why the phone company may force you to switch to a VoIP phone within the next 3 to 4 years.
- 3 different ways to implement VoIP
- Hidden costs with certain VoIP systems that can negate any cost savings you might gain on your phone bill.
- 4 revealing questions to ask any VoIP salesperson to cut through the hype, halftruths and “little white lies” they’ll tell you to make the sale.
- The ONLY way to know for sure if VoIP will work in your environment and in your business.



The Ultimate Guide To Choosing The RIGHT VoIP Phone System For Your Multi-Location Office Or Remote Workforce

A Letter From The Author: Why We Created This Report And Who Should Read It



From The Desk of: **Robert Zehnder**
President, Hodgson Consulting & Solutions

Dear Fellow Executive,

If you're looking to purchase a new phone system, you're about to make a very important decision that, if mishandled, may not only cause you to waste a lot of time and money, but also can frustrate your clients, new potential clients and employees with dropped calls, poor sound quality and a host of other communication problems.

If you've just started shopping around, I'm sure you were met with conflicting advice, confusing "geek speak" and no real answers to your questions and concerns about sound quality, cost savings and whether or not VoIP will work with your current network and Internet connection.

That's why we wrote this report. We wanted to offer you a simple, straightforward guide that not only answers your questions in plain English, but also provides vital experience-based information on choosing a VoIP system that most phone system sales guys don't know (or may not tell you). After all, selecting something as critical as your company's phone system is a decision you do not want to make lightly.

My name is Robert Zehnder. My organization specializes in removing the technical frustration, obstacles and inefficiencies for companies with multiple locations and or a remote workforce.

If you don't find the answer to a question you have in this report, we are always available to answer a quick question or to provide a second opinion. Please contact my office direct if we can clarify any points made in this report or answer any questions you have.

Dedicated to serving you,
Robert Zehnder, President
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Good News And Bad News: You Have A Lot Of Options!

Thanks to voice over internet protocol (VoIP) and ever-improving cloud technologies, the options available to you as a small (or big!) business are plentiful, with more features at a lower cost than were available the last time you went shopping for a phone system.

However, with all the options and dozens of vendors, separating the good from the bad and navigating the marketing hype can be difficult. Not only are some VoIP systems a complete waste of money for a business environment, but fees can be “hidden,” so what appears to be a big cost-saving decision (initially) can end up costing you more in the long run once you’ve calculated in ALL costs over a 1- to 3- year period.

Additionally, if not designed, implemented and supported properly, VoIP phone systems can be extremely problematic and can be MORE expensive than a traditional phone system, depending on your specific situation.



BUYER BEWARE!

Saving money on your phone bill should NOT be your only criteria when considering a VoIP phone system for 2 important reasons.

First, dropped calls and poor sound quality will frustrate you and cause prospects to hang up and call your competition

– so you might save some money on your phone bill, but you LOSE customers and sales. Definitely NOT a good trade-off.

Second, make sure you look at the TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP (TCO), not just the savings on your phone bill, which is what almost every VoIP salesperson focuses on.

While it's not the norm, there are certain cases where VoIP may actually cost you MORE than a traditional phone system because of the features and costs your VoIP vendor adds on, negating any savings on your phone bill.

What Is VoIP?

In the simplest terms, VoIP (or voice over Internet protocol) is a way for phone conversations to be transmitted over the Internet instead of using traditional phone lines that have been used for the last several decades.

Without a doubt, all phone communications will be transmitted this way in the very near future and, like it or not, you will eventually be using a VoIP phone system.

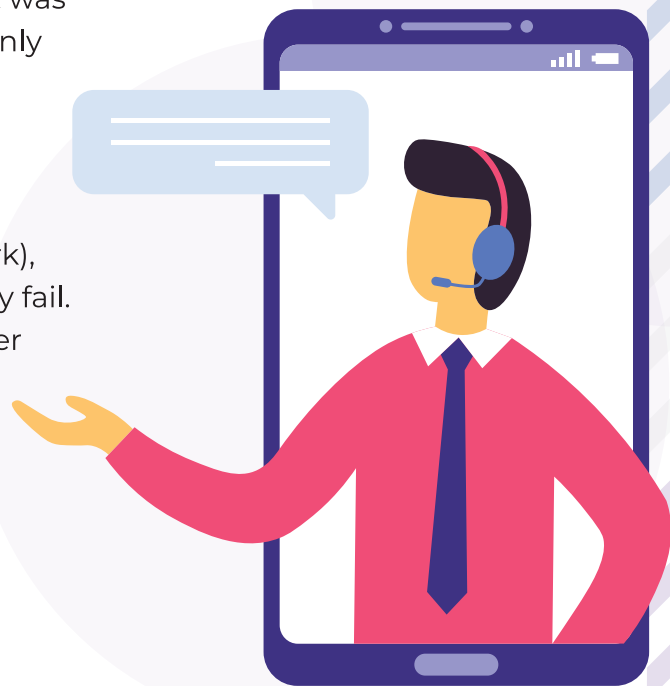
Here's why...

Do you remember Hurricane Sandy? One of the hardest-hit areas was Mantoloking, an island off the coast of New Jersey. The storm destroyed the city's copper telephone network that had kept it connected to the rest of the world for over a century.

But instead of replacing it, one of the companies that provides telephone service to the area, Verizon, chose NOT to rebuild the island's copper network and replaced it with their wireless service, Voice Link. This kicked off a number of complaints from residents who wanted their old landline phone back, but it was not a battle they could win. This is only one example of similar situations happening all over America. Phone providers are opting to retire traditional phone lines, or the PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network), instead of repairing them when they fail. In their place, they are installing fiber optic cables that carry VoIP, offering wireless services or a combination of the two.

In fact, the traditional landline is not expected to last the decade in a country where 40% of households use only wireless phones, and less than 10% have ONLY a landline. Fact is, more and more people are opting to use their cell phone as their home phone, and businesses are steadily replacing traditional phone systems for VoIP. Therefore, the phone providers do not want to continue to incur the heavy costs of replacing, repairing and updating the old phone lines since they are getting fewer customers using them every day.

For quite some time, AT&T was petitioning the FCC to retire the PSTN, calling it a "death spiral" because of the exorbitant costs of maintaining it, and citing how fewer people are using it every year. Last year, the FCC approved AT&T's petition to move forward on the transition, and AT&T plans to have the PSTN retired by 2020. So, even if you are determined not to make a switch, you may be forced to change sometime within the next 3 to 4 years.



The 3 Main Options You Have For Your Business Phone And The (Honest) Pros And Cons Of Each

So let's start by outlining the types of phone system options below, who they are most appropriate for and the pros and cons of each.

1. VIRTUAL PHONE SERVICE

This is a good option for start-ups or small home-based businesses that don't have a traditional office, with a handful of employees who are out in the field or who work from home. A virtual phone system is like a hosted web site. Instead of buying actual phones and phone lines, you purchase a service that will give you a local or toll-free number to provide clients or to post on your web site, business card and marketing collateral. When someone calls, that call will be routed to a designated cell phone (yours or other employees') or a home phone. Some services will even answer the phone for you like Call Ruby. This keeps your personal cell phone or home phone number private, and gives you the ability to route calls based on the time of day, call purpose, etc. You can also set up the system to call through a list of numbers until someone answers live. Some of the companies providing this type of service include Grasshopper, RingCentral and 8x8.

THE PROS: As with most phone services, the costs will depend on the number of extensions and minutes used, but you save money by not having to buy phones; calls are routed to your cell phone or home phone. You can also get the same features of many big phone systems, such as multiple extensions, call forwarding, local and toll-free

numbers, voice mail, read your voice mail messages, name directories, music on hold, fax on demand and call screening. Also, if you move locations, you don't have to pay to move the physical phone system equipment.

THE CONS: The biggest disadvantage is poor call quality and a lag time when calls are transferred to you - which is not something you want to overlook.

If you have potential buyers calling to do business with you, that lag time to answer and poor sound quality will cost you sales when people hang up out of frustration (or thinking nobody is answering) and give new potential prospects a poor image of your organization. Further, some providers will require you to sign a lengthy contract; while some will waive this requirement, you will get better pricing by signing a longer-term contract. Also, the cost savings over time may not be as significant as they are in the short term. This option is best suited for a start-up or home-based business.

2. LANDLINE PHONES

This is the phone system you most likely have in your office now, or at least have had at one point in your business. Although this is still the most reliable phone system, delivering the highest call quality, thousands of businesses are replacing their traditional phone systems for the cost savings of VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) phone systems, since the features, call clarity and

reliability of VoIP systems have improved dramatically in recent years and will continue to improve.

The PROS: If voice clarity and phone line dependability are paramount to your business, then landline phones are still the best choice. Further, a phone line is not powered the same way electricity is, so if the power goes off or is interrupted, your phone will still work, making this a better option for areas that are prone to outages or companies where working phone lines are critical to their business.

The CONS: The biggest downside is the cost. Landline systems are the most expensive to install and support. While the cost of landline services has dropped over the last decade, they often can't beat the cost savings offered by a VoIP system. Second, you may be FORCED to switch to VoIP based on the clear movement toward retiring traditional copper phone lines, as discussed previously in this report; so you want to give serious consideration to whether or not you want to invest in a more traditional phone system at this time.

3. VoIP (VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL)

VoIP works by converting audio signals (your conversation) into digital data that travels over broadband Internet via fiber optic lines, DSL or cable INSTEAD of over traditional phone lines. VoIP phones are plugged into a VoIP adapter and then into your computer, firewall or Internet connection. Without a doubt, VoIP will, at some point, completely eliminate the need for landline phones.

The PROS: One of the biggest benefits to VoIP is cost savings. And if you have multiple offices, make a lot of international calls and have a heavy call center, the savings can be staggering.

VoIP also offers all the same features you can get with a landline PLUS many advanced features you cannot get with a traditional landline phone such as the ability to listen to voice-mail messages and place or receive a call from your laptop, PC or tablet and the ability to do video conferencing.

The CONS: As you may already know or have heard, it's common to experience dropped calls, connectivity issues, crackling, echoes and interruptions (like hearing every other word of a conversation) when on a VoIP line. However, this does NOT have to be the case and largely depends on what VoIP option you are using. In the next section, we'll talk about the 4 types of VoIP systems available, and how choosing the right VoIP system can deliver the same (or better) high-definition sound quality and dependability as a landline.



The 3 Types Of VoIP Options Available Today

There are 3 different methods for getting calls routed over the Internet (VoIP) – but only ONE will deliver the voice quality and reliability you want for your business.

BUYER TIP: BE SURE TO SELECT A BUSINESS-GRADE VOIP SYSTEM!

While this may seem obvious, when selecting a VoIP system for your company, be sure you select a business-grade system. I'm sure you've heard of Vonage and magicJack. While they are perfectly good VoIP systems for home use, they are consumergrade and cannot handle the demands or call volume that a business has. Choose those for your business and you WILL be frustrated and plagued with problems.

SIP TRUNKING (SESSION INITIATION PROTOCOL) PHONE LINES

SIP trunking phone lines – which are Internet-delivered telephone lines – are an alternative to the traditional copper phone lines you have used for years. These are sold by almost every Internet provider, such as Comcast, Earthlink, Charter or Time Warner, and work with your existing desk phones. The main reason for choosing this option is purely to save money; however, MANY businesses who have chosen this route come to us to replace it due to the wide number of problems this option presents.

For starters, you're still stuck with your old, outdated phone system and you don't gain any of the additional features that a VoIP system can offer, such as find me, follow me, advanced auto attendant features, the ability to take and receive calls from any phone or cell phone, video conferencing, unlimited voice mail and much, much more. You're also stuck with a system that won't scale up if you need to add more employees, locations and phone lines.

But the biggest and most likely problem you'll have with this option is call quality. In fact, it's THIS option that has given VoIP such a bad name. Because your phone calls are now being carried over the same Internet connection you use to get your office computers online, if someone in your company decides to download a big file or play a video, your phone calls will suddenly sound garbled or you'll hear every other word of the conversation.

Additionally, your phone bill cost savings may be negated by your need for additional Internet bandwidth. This is most notable if you're switching from a lower-cost Internet service like DSL to high-speed, business-class Internet.

WHAT DOES PBX STAND FOR AND WHAT IS IT?

A PBX (private branch exchange) is a business-grade telephone system that switches calls between the company's employees on local lines while allowing all employees to share a certain number of external phone lines.

ON-PREMISE IP PBX

This VoIP option usually provides better call quality than the first 2, but still has limitations. Common providers are 3CX, Asterisks, ShorTel, Epygi and Cisco Call Manager.

As with a hosted PBX, if your Internet goes down, your phones stop working altogether – and there’s no way to failover to another service or phone like a hybrid solution can (see below).

Second, voice-mail storage is finite because it’s stored on a hard drive in your office. Once it’s full, you can’t get more space. And if you have multiple locations and/or remote workers, you’ll be forced to implement and maintain a complicated VPN (virtual private network) for each location, with a robust Internet connection or other connectivity method that can be very expensive to maintain.

HOSTED PBX

A “hosted PBX” is a VoIP phone system where the “brain” of the system that controls all the calls, settings and operation of your phone system is located or hosted by your provider in their cloud somewhere offsite – just like a hosted web site. Instead of your staff having to learn how to operate physical infrastructure and technology, staff member only need to know how to make phone calls, retrieve messages, forward calls and other simple operations.

This is absolutely the best option for a distributed workforce. By connecting remote employees under a single Internet-based communications solution (VoIP) this allows businesses to capitalize on the benefits of a distributed workforce without paying

the excessive costs associated with traditional landline phone solutions. Under this single, Internet-based phone system, remote employees receive all of the same telecom benefits they would get as if they were right in the main office. This includes the ability to call co-workers at headquarters or other locations using extension dialing instead of placing long distance calls between different phone systems.

Other benefits of Hosted PBX include:

- **Maintenance and reliability.** Hosted systems usually contain multiple points of redundancy, meaning that even if one aspect of the system fails, there are backup technologies in place to ensure continued service. In the rare event that a hosted system does break down, the service provider will take care of it without cost to the client. With one less thing to worry about, companies can focus on their own business, rather than wasting resources on maintaining their phone system.
- **Features and service.** Hosted phone systems offer key features at no additional cost that are not always present in legacy phone systems. These typically include basic features such as call waiting, forwarding, holding and voice mail. Some hosted services also include more advanced features, such as voice mail to email transfer, web management and dialing by name directory. Hosted systems can also offer tracking and reporting of outgoing and incoming calls, which can be valuable to certain types of companies.

4 Revealing Questions To Ask Any VoIP Salesperson To Cut Through The Hype, Half-Truths And “Little” White Lies

1) HOW MANY DATA CENTERS DO YOU HAVE AND ARE THEY GEOGRAPHICALLY DISBURSED?

If the answer is only one, run away! What happens if their ONE data center goes down? Or, more commonly, what happens when the VoIP equipment inside the data center goes down? Your business is without a phone until they get their systems back online! Insist on a provider that has redundant data centers that are away from each other to lower the risk of a natural disaster wiping out both data centers at once.

2) WHAT WAS THE UPTIME TLAST YEAR? WHAT’S YOUR GUARANTEE FOR UPTIME?

If it’s anything less than 99.999%, find a different provider. And don’t just take them at their word; ask for documentation proving the reliability of their network in the previous year. If they can’t even do that, don’t buy their system! Further, if they can’t or WON’T guarantee a 99.999% uptime, shop elsewhere.

NOTE: Uptime is the system’s ability to make and receive calls. If an individual office happens to be down due to an Internet outage, this does not affect the overall reliability of the system because the system was ready and able.

BUYER BEWARE!

Companies that sell phone systems and do not install and support computer networks – which is what your VoIP system is running on – are often NOT qualified to recommend or install a VoIP phone system for your office. One of the biggest reasons for VoIP failure, poor sound quality, slowed Internet speeds, etc., is that the person selling you a VoIP system does not understand how to properly assess your company’s firewall, routers, network traffic, Internet connection speeds, as well as a host of other factors, to make sure their phone system will work as advertised in YOUR SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENT. That’s because they’re phone system sales guys, not network engineers. Of course they’ll tell you they’re qualified to do this – so be sure to ask them if they’ll put their money where their mouth is with a money-back guarantee like we do. You can read about our 100% nosmall-print money-back guarantee later in this document.

3) DO YOU MONITOR MY PHONES AND SYSTEM 24/7/365 FOR ANY POTENTIAL ISSUES?

If you have to tell your provider the phones aren't working, then find another provider. Any quality vendor should be monitoring and maintaining your system for you, using remote management tools. The system should be selfregulating and know if a phone or system is offline and automatically make routing adjustments to ensure calls coming in are answered properly. Then, a technician should contact you to address the problem. If you are missing calls, move on to a different system.

4) WILL OUR TELEPHONE FEATURES BE THE SAME WHEN WE MOVE TO VoIP?

Don't assume this! Even basic features like call forwarding might not be included! You would be amazed to find out how many VoIP systems fail to have the most basic features, such as call forwarding. You should insist on a hands-on demonstration in order to see the system for yourself and how it will work. This will avoid unpleasant "surprises" after you've paid for and installed the new system.

