

# VoIP MOVES TO THE CLOUD

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Photo by Brian Ambs

Many small to mid-sized businesses (SMBs) are discovering how the cloud can dramatically transform their business. Co-location and virtual hosting options (for production servers) are viable alternatives to on-premise hardware. SaaS (software as a service) or hosted solutions for business applications give SMBs the ability to get enterprise-class software at a fraction of the cost.

With hosted services, SMBs can remain focused on their business rather than manage email communications, file storage, and various forms of collaboration. It also reduces their hardware expenses. The next logical step in this cloud transformation is telephony, or in layman's terms, your business phone system.

## Get Rid of the PBX

A Private Branch Exchange (PBX) serves a private office and makes connections among internal telephones, while connecting the inside office with the external public. Handling a PBX is usually not a core competency for an SMB. Fortunately, VoIP providers offer cloud-hosted IP-PBX platforms that give the SMB a full-featured, robust enterprise business phone system. There are several other reasons why an SMB should leverage the cloud and switch to a Hosted VoIP phone system:

### A Hosted VoIP system is less expensive

Rather than paying for a large system that may not be needed, businesses can pay as they grow. Start small and then add "seats" to the system. Often organizations will realize a reduction in call costs, particularly if the business has multiple locations requiring frequent communication back and forth (see Custom Distributors on next page). Other instances where savings can be found are with organizations that make regular long-distance calls or inter-

national calls. With a hosted VoIP phone system, there are no large upfront capital investments.

### The VoIP system requires less in-house technical expertise

Most companies don't have the money to hire and/or employ IT personnel specifically to manage a phone system. With your hosted VoIP system, support and maintenance is provided.

### Upgrades are provided as they are rolled out

Keeping up with new technologies is important in any industry, and with hosted VoIP, staying up-to-date is all part of the program. Free upgrades mean you have the most advanced, user-friendly system.

### There is no reliance on a single physical host site

Business continuity and disaster recovery are inherently built in. Since everything is operated through the cloud, businesses are protected from shutdown in the case of a natural or manmade disaster.

### The VoIP system helps increase productivity

Employees are able to respond to customers' needs more quickly because robust functionalities such as auto attendant and call handling

allow customers to reach specific departments directly. Additionally, unified communication features such as find-me-follow-me, voice-mail to email, and more empower employees to communicate more freely and efficiently.

### A single platform for a distributed workforce

If a business has employees in multiple locations, even working from home, customers can reach them directly as if they are working in the office. So regardless if the employee works locally, or across the country, it will appear that your business is close to home.

The cloud is changing the approach many SMBs are taking toward networking and supporting mission-critical applications. For an SMB, a hosted VoIP system offers more value, less upkeep, and the same collaboration and back-up features of a larger company.

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