

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO HOSTED VOICE

Everything you need to know about
hosted voice

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Interested in hosted voice? Not sure if it's for you, or whether your business is ready? Surely, there must be more to it than putting your phone system in the cloud.

Well, yes there is. Hosted voice has become the backbone to digital transformation and often viewed as the first step to moving your business to the cloud.

When reviewing a new technology, it's tricky to find all the resources you need. Especially, if you aren't 100% that you need it yet.

But we've been through this before. We've seen the hurdles that businesses must overcome and been asked the questions that IT Managers need to know. Translating features into business benefits and relating hosted voice technology to things you use every day is part and parcel of our job.

Introducing a new technology into any business is a long process. Anything that can speed that up must be viewed as a comfort. We've created the ultimate guide to choosing a hosted voice solution to do just that.

So, let's break it down.

From learning the basic principles of hosted voice to spotting the subtle differences between solutions and products, your hosted voice journey starts here.

Or if you're partway through your process, you can jump to your relevant stage here.

What is hosted voice?

At the start of your journey, you'll be inundated with new products and services that are designed to sit on top of your IT infrastructure and provide a feature rich telephony experience.

Before you get carried away with features and functionality, it's important to get a thorough understanding of what hosted voice is.

Hosted voice is often referred to using other terms. When used together or by different providers, it's hard to gauge whether you are talking about the

same technologies. In general, these terms listed below all mean the same thing:

- Cloud PBX
- Cloud Phone System
- Hosted Telephony
- Hosted PBX
- Cloud Telephony
- VoIP
- Hosted VoIP

Hosted voice, or any of the terms above, are essentially taking a phone system and hosting it in the cloud. As phone systems are moved into the cloud, the door opens for businesses to consume more innovative features and functionality that are not available on a traditional PBX.

Understanding the what, why, how and where to start are fundamental points when looking at hosted telephony. This guide to hosted voice is the perfect way to quick start your hosted voice journey.

Is your on-premises PBX costing you more than you think?

If you compare on-premises and cloud PBXs side by side, there will be some glaringly obvious differences. The technical architecture is completely different. The features and functionality changes from limited to unlimited. But, most importantly and most obvious is the cost difference.

The items on your initial invoice were no doubt considerable compared to the expected up-front costs of a cloud PBX. Cloud technologies are favourable for those companies looking to switch from a Capex model to an Opex model. On top of this, there will be some regular outgoings that you may not have planned for when you first purchased your PBX.

Items that don't appear on your PBX purchase invoice are the hidden costs that just get paid as they are deemed business essentials. Items like phone lines, engineering, repairs, maintenance,

additional licenses and usage are viewed as part and parcel of an ongoing business.

As you move to cloud technology, and cloud PBXs in particular, these costly items get wrapped up into one license that cover everything. By moving from an on-premises PBX to a cloud PBX, you have a clear view of the charges you should expect to pay for the next 3-5 years. When business planning, cost is king. Check out our tick list to see who really if you've really paid off your old PBX.

Hosted voice features

Some providers publish their list of features for their hosted voice solutions. Reality is that there are so many features that redirecting you to a feature list doesn't benefit anybody.

Traditional phone systems of old came with feature cards that informed you of the 50 things your phone can do. As cloud technology has matured, not only has the functionality set expanded exponentially, but new features will continue to be added to on a regular basis.

The core features of hosted voice will always include things like HD calling, disaster recovery and various operational functions like transferring, music on hold and call recording. Discussing these features would be the same with most provider – and doesn't help differentiate between solutions, providers or even on-premises vs cloud.

Hosted voice comes into its own when you explore the exceptional features. The stand out items that you simply cannot implement on your current phone system.

- **Acoustic fence technology** leverages the power of VoIP and your network to deliver soundproofing your desk – never again will you be interrupted by background noise or the shuffling of documents by your neighbour
- **Never miss a call** again with find me follow me functionality and intelligent call routing – when important business calls come in, ensure they are answered every single time
- **Self service** enables you to free up additional resource and empower people to deliver the

value add services that are so crucial to businesses

- **Team collaboration** means so much more than getting together on a Monday morning – hosted voice enables true team collaboration; be it verbally, written, real-time or after the event
- **Enhanced analytics** allow you to glean insights into your business with the click of a button – historical and real-time reporting can help you allocate resource and transform your business communications

Benefits of hosted voice

It's easy to talk about the benefits of hosted voice because there are so many. Each individual feature can bring a different benefit to a different user. When evaluating whether to choose hosted voice or stick with your on-premises solution, hosted voice is usually broken down in the following categories of benefits:

- **Feature richness** – when exploring cloud phone systems, you can fully expect an influx

of new features that you have been calling out for, or may not have known existed but you will become reliant on

- **Productivity gains** – when adopting new features and functionality, you will see your business start to free up time and work more cohesively; better technology usually drives a better working environment
- **Total scalability** – unlike when making changes on your existing PBX, hosted voice enables you to make on the fly changes with no upper or lower limit
- **Rapid deployment capabilities** – every time you open a new site, hosted voice is configurable on demand and doesn't take months of planning and installation
- **Secure infrastructure** – no longer do you need to worry about on-site security concerns as service providers employ carrier grade security and privacy practices when hosting your phone system
- **Integration into business critical applications** – no business runs on communications alone so the ability to integrate into your most frequently used

applications means more and improved functionality from your existing investments

- **Crystal clear HD voice** – when moving from one phone system to another, the core will always be calling; users expect an improvement as standard when upgrading a phone system and will be impressed with the clarity of voice and video calls
- **Detailed reporting and analytics** – the deeper insight into your business communications, the more you can do to improve them; when deploying hosted telephony, you are engulfing your business in mountains of data and information that is handily translated into reports, graphs and analysis for you to base your business decisions on
- **In-built disaster recovery** – there is no longer an acceptable reason for your business communications to be down; be it reactive or automatic, disaster recovery scenarios can be pre built to ensure your business always has access to the phone
- **Overall cost reduction** – with the endless features and benefits, you could be fooled

into thinking that your costs will go up; reality is that you only need pay for the features you consume, and cloud technology has enabled a better, more cost effective way to purchase PBX technology.

Trends driving demand for hosted voice

You are not the only business evaluating hosted voice right now. Adoptions stats show that the VoIP market will grow to [over \\$200bn by 2020](#) and that the [average cost of calling will reduce by 90%](#) through VoIP adoption. It is right to acknowledge that demand for hosted voice is on a continuous upward curve. It is better to know the reasons why there is such keen demand for hosted voice.

Staff are more mobile than ever. Through innovations like guest and social Wi-Fi, 4G calling and video conferencing, your business has employees that require collaboration outside of the office. Mobility is a key trend driving demand for voice.

Trust and reliance on tools to automate processes is at it's highest. Through the introduction of devices like Alexa and Google Home, consumers have started to trust tools and applications to do their work for them. Hosted voice is no different. Businesses can employ an intelligent IVR or a constant VoIP monitoring system to conduct the mundane tasks that do not require genuine human interaction.

Just like trust in automation, cloud confidence has reached an all time high. As technology has evolved, businesses have started to put applications, servers and data in the cloud. In the modern world where cloud technology is widely recognised as safe and secure, businesses have made an informed decision to migrate their phone system to the cloud too.

How does network performance impact hosted voice?

As IT managers and CIOs progress through the hosted voice process, many questions are asked. No question is more common than "will my

network performance impact hosted voice?" The answer to this is, simply, yes.

Ultimately, if your network is performing poorly, any applications or devices that sit on top of, or form part of, your network will be affected. In anticipation of a hosted voice deployment, it is important to get a step ahead of your users. By taking care of any network considerations, you reduce the likelihood of queries and support tickets following implementation.

To ensure your network is ready for hosted voice, consider these three beginner steps:

Network Upgrades

When moving to hosted voice, ensure your network equipment is fit for purpose. A top spec voice router and enough bandwidth via your internet service provider are good starting points here.

Network Configuration

Prioritise VoIP traffic to improve both latency and jitter. This is typically achieved by using bandwidth

reservation, policy-based network management, Type of Service and Class of Service.

Network Monitoring

Without a clear view of your network, you won't know where the problems are occurring.

For a more detailed look at how network performance impacts hosted voice, skip to our [blog](#).

Hosted voice installation requirements

Every business is different. Therefore, every business will have different hosted voice installation requirements. We have seen a variety of industries implement different VoIP deployments and have noted some common themes and key activities to conduct when planning your installation requirements.

Taking away one user's phone may not be an issue. Removing a thousand phones could have a negative impact on morale or productivity.

Conducting an audit of hard phone versus soft phone is a simple place to start when capturing requirements. Some organisations take a top down approach and we see internal product champions. Identifying user personas and their associated requirements is a key first step when gathering requirements.

Outside of individual use, it is important to factor in collaborative work and meetings. Hosted voice also caters for your meeting rooms as well as your users. Just because they don't have a voice doesn't mean they should go unheard.

The most feared requirement is usually how and when to install. Do you take the big bang approach and migrate everybody over at the same time? Do you stagger the install over a matter of weeks and locations? Every business is different. Therefore, every business will have different hosted voice installation requirements. No matter what they are, it's important to get them right.

Hosted voice products

When designing your hosted voice solution, there are key components like the core voice platform, but there are also bolt-on products that drive innovation and higher productivity within your business.

The number of bolt-on type products differs from vendor to vendor. Generally, these products look similar as they are all trying to reach the same end goal: enhance the core solution. Included with our hosted voice solution are some industry leading peripheral products that could transform your business even in a standalone capacity. We include them in our hosted voice solution to offer these best of breed technologies to be consumed when required.

- **Go Integrator** – pulling together your real time and non-real time communications is crucial for businesses to operate at optimum performance. By adding functionality into applications like Salesforce, Dynamics and

Skype for Business, it is like you've purchased a new product.

- **Dubber Call Recording** – call recording requirements have changed over time; industry specific regulations mean longer retention periods and strict storage considerations. With these taken care of as standard, Dubber opens the door to doing more with call recording. Its intelligent engine allows transcription and keyword searching, as well as sentiment and emotion analysis.
- **Akixi Real Time Reporting** - During and after a call, there is a lot of data to digest. With Akixi, you get the power to react in real-time to events such managing missed calls to ensure every customer is called back, as well as pro-active information to alert you when set queues exceed their thresholds.
- **BlueJeans Video Conferencing** – Video conferencing services empower a business to offer face to face meetings without leaving the office. A natural step up from audio conferencing, BlueJeans enables content sharing, peer to peer and multi-party video connected into your existing video endpoints.

- **Polycom RealPresence Trio** – the ultimate conference phone that can cater for all your meeting room and conferencing needs. Combining unrivalled HD voice quality with powerful video and content performance, the Polycom RealPresence Trio is the perfect solution for your meeting spaces.

Why now is the right time to implement hosted voice

If the features, benefits and trends are enough to sway you towards hosted voice immediately, there are some key elements that you should contemplate before dismissing making the move.

Keeping up with competition

Simply, if your nearest competitor is using better technology, they have more chance of winning business that you otherwise might have won.

Getting ahead of competition

And vice versa. Given the choice, your business should be the one that gets ahead of the competition. A leading hosted voice platform can be used as the platform for a business to be completely market dominating.

Attracting the best talent

Dominating a market often means expanding and recruiting for new staff. When seeking and hiring new talent, demands and expectations have changed. If the technology available in an interviewees pocket can do more than your phone system, they are likely going to accept an offer elsewhere.

Retaining talent

The other end of the talent spectrum is looking after your own. Simple things like not having a line available or a salesperson's client not being able to contact them can deteriorate even the best of working relationships. A forward thinking,

innovative company can retain its best staff by always keeping up with technology.

Productivity

The four points above all point to productivity. Better technology enables a more productive workforce. People buy from and want to work for the most productive companies. If your phone system is the hub of your business, it is the right time to implement hosted voice.

What does our hosted voice solution include?

Our hosted voice solution comprises a carrier grade platform, best of breed telephony and conferencing hardware endpoints and market leading peripheral services.

Platform

SAS use a BroadSoft platform to deliver core telephony features and functionality. BroadSoft,

Inc. is a global communication software and service provider that was purchased by Cisco Systems in 2018 for \$1.9bn. With leading market share in cloud UC call-control shipments, BroadSoft is the industry leader in cloud Unified Communications and hosted voice. BroadSoft is chosen by 25 of the world's top 30 service providers across 80 countries.

Handsets

SAS has selected market leaders Polycom and Yealink as the suggested handset manufacturers for hosted telephony. The decision to choose Polycom or Yealink is factored in at the requirements gathering stage. Both manufacturers specialise in different scenarios. It is important that our solution is tailored to your requirements, rather than prescriptive.

Polycom are widely recognised as the VoIP handset market leader and were recently purchased by Plantronics for \$2bn.

Yealink provides more specialist handsets such as the recently announced [portable CP930W conference unit](#).

Call Centre

Scalable from 2 to 10,000 users, 200 sets of historical and real-time call statistics, dials, alarms, charts and desktop wallboards are at your disposal.

Analytics

Real time and historical call analytics are available across the entire hosted telephony platform. This suite of services delivers completely customisable reports and insights related to all extensions, devices and groups within a business or department.

Integration

Integrating business communications with third party applications enhances the capabilities of your other business applications. Integration into desktop environments like Office 365, Salesforce and Lotus Notes combine your frequently used

tools to leverage joint features through computer telephony integration (CTI). Once connected, features include contact popping, click to dial, desktop call control, presence, messaging, and calendar sync.

ABOUT SAS

We design, deploy and manage the networks on which our customers run their businesses in an increasingly digital world.

Our hybrid networks will help customers digitalise their businesses

THE BEST PRICE POSSIBLE

Our hybrid networks, enhanced by SD-WAN, blend carriers and technologies to optimise the price of every site, and minimise installation cost with zero touch deployment. We offer transparent pricing for peace of mind.

THE FASTEST DEPLOYMENT

Our hybrid networks let you choose circuits that deliver fastest for each site, and our 4G WAN circuits offer 2 day delivery with seamless transition to permanent circuits.

THE EASIEST MIGRATION

We can phase your migrations to suit you, minimising cost and hassle.

THE BEST PERFORMANCE AND UPTIME

Our advanced monitoring shows the whole application path, raise 95% of key issues proactively and allows detailed reporting and drill-down to show issues and long-term trends.

THE MOST ENJOYABLE AND PAIN FREE EXPERIENCE

Our end to end digital systems and processes deliver Right First Time with clear, accurate bills.