



Choosing the Right Business VoIP Option for Small Businesses

Introduction

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 come to mind. With so much on your plate, 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). This system does its job, but there are other alternatives out there that can help your business save money, be more productive, and improve the customer experience.

For many years, phone systems with sophisticated features were only available to bigger businesses that had the capital to make a large upfront investment in equipment and 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 are 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 of them.

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. They are:

- **SIP Trunking/Integrated Access** – These products allow you to continue to use your existing phone system, but with 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 followed by 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 and is hosted in the cloud, which means that it is owned and managed by your service provider. You pay a monthly fee for the service with little or no capital investment.

Let us now examine these options in greater detail.

SIP Trunking

One of the simplest ways for a small business to switch to VoIP is SIP 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 a SIP Trunking solution, voice and Internet are generally carried over a single data circuit with part of the circuit used for voice and 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 second gaps in-between every exchange), phone calls always take priority over Internet traffic like web browsing or email.

Some of the benefits of SIP 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 of 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 generally have predictable monthly costs. A small business will typically pay a fee based on how many concurrent phone calls they might make at any time. 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.

While SIP Trunking is an easy way for businesses to make the jump to VoIP, it doesn't improve the existing equipment. If you have an aging phone system or need new functionality to help your business run better, then purchasing a new phone system could be a better choice.

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 and, as such, it requires you to pay for the phone system, new phones, and to have it installed. These purchases can easily add up to thousands of dollars (\$5,000-10,000 is not uncommon). 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.

Some 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. Eventually, just like with an old PC, there comes a time when upgrading is no longer 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, such as 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 on 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.

Some of the characteristics of Hosted IP-PBX are:

- **Low or No Capital Costs** – Since there is no equipment to purchase, the upfront costs are limited and often 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 much your costs will increase.
- **No Maintenance Expenses** – Because the service provider owns the equipment, they are responsible for all of 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 secure, service provider owned facility with safeguards like backup power and equipment, events such as a power outage at your location will not affect your business. You can simply and quickly configure the service to have the calls routed to an alternate number (such as another office, 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.

AirePBX from AireSpring

AireSpring is an award-winning provider of cloud communications and connectivity solutions serving thousands of businesses nationwide. We provide fully managed and connected end-to-end, next-generation solutions including Cloud Contact Center, Unified Communications, Business VoIP Phone Systems, SIP Trunking, MPLS, and Internet. Our services are delivered over our revolutionary nationwide MPLS MESH network, providing customers with a fully integrated, end to end solution from a single vendor. AirePBX is a cloud hosted IP-PBX that makes an incredible range of features and capabilities available at a fraction of the cost of an on-site phone system.

Benefits

AirePBX is truly the last phone system you'll ever need. It delivers best-in-class capabilities at a price that's affordable for all businesses. As described earlier, a hosted solution has a lot of advantages, namely low capital expenses, predictable billing, business continuity benefits, and no obsolescence. In addition to those, there are several more reasons to choose this phone system.

One bundled price covers everything you need to run your business. AirePBX 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 IP phones on 3 year contracts
- Business-wide features such as auto attendant and music on hold
- Equipment and professional on-site installation

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 add new users to your account with ease.

Have a remote employee? The power of AirePBX enables you to put a phone virtually anywhere with an Internet connection and have it work seamlessly with the rest of your business lines and extensions.

Big Business Features

AirePBX provides you all the features you need and more. If you're on an older system, then you'll be thrilled with the functionality that's available in AirePBX. Included are the features you'd expect: call transfer, voicemail, call forwarding, and other standard functionality. However, what truly makes AirePBX exciting are the advanced capabilities such as multi-level auto attendant, simultaneous ring, multi-line hunt group, find me/follow me forwarding, mobile client for iPhone and Android, call management, fax machine support, music-on-hold, and more. These cutting edge features are typically restricted to expensive enterprise systems. Hosted PBX enables them for a small business without a large price tag.

Beyond the advanced feature set, AirePBX also offers many other benefits. These include:

- **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 for much of the day? With the click of a mouse, a user can take advantage of AirePBX's powerful remote office capabilities to have their desk phone and mobile phone ring simultaneously, as well as have all messages routed 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.

- **Customer Service and Support** – AireSpring provides professional and reliable support to all of our customers. Should there ever be a question or problem, our trained staff will solve it quickly and to your satisfaction. We provide one bill and one point of contact for all services, which eliminates the typical finger pointing that occurs between different providers. Our AireNMS network monitoring service delivers 24/7 proactive monitoring by the AireSpring network operations center (NOC) for your peace of mind and is offered free for AireSpring provided equipment. We also provide professional on-site installation of phones and routers at your location to make sure you are getting the best service possible at every step of the process.
- **Voice Quality and Security** – Since AirePBX is a service that's fully managed, we ensure a superior experience. Other companies use the commercial internet to route voice calls, which results in calls that must compete with all the other traffic out there and end up sounding like they're taking place on a bad cell phone. With AirePBX, end-to-end quality and security are assured. All calls are routed over AireSpring's fully managed network with Quality of Service (QoS) to give your calls highest priority.

Conclusion

There are a lot of options out there when looking at a phone system and it may seem like sticking with the status quo, rather than embracing change, is the safest and most comfortable choice. However, the pace of technology has made available to small businesses an impressive array of capabilities that were previously only available to larger enterprises. Instead of missing out on an opportunity to help your business be more productive, now might be the right time to evaluate your needs in light of these new capabilities. You might find you can make a big technological jump forward while spending almost the same as what you're paying today or even saving money.

With AirePBX, AireSpring is delivering a best-in-class phone system with no upfront costs that allows you to buy only what you need. We take care of all the details, including phones, equipment, installation, training, and ongoing service, so you can focus on your business. Best of all, we're available around the clock with our first-class customer service to provide you with the support you need.

Call or email us today to find out how AirePBX can benefit your business.

About AireSpring

Headquartered in Los Angeles, AireSpring is an award-winning provider of cloud communications and connectivity solutions serving thousands of businesses nationwide. AireSpring provides fully managed and connected end-to-end, next-generation solutions for multi-location enterprise customers, including Cloud Contact Center, Unified Communications, Business VoIP Phone Systems, SIP Trunking, MPLS, and Internet. AireSpring's solutions are offered through a diversified network of channel partners that includes distributors, master agents, managed service providers, and value added resellers. AireSpring's services are delivered over its revolutionary nationwide MPLS MESH network, providing customers a fully integrated, end-to-end solution from a single vendor.

AireSpring has received numerous industry awards for "Product of the Year," "Best Telecom Deal," "Best in Show," and "Top Channel Program." AireSpring is privately held, diversified, debt-free, and renowned in the industry for delivering a broad range of innovative cloud communications and connectivity solutions at competitive rates. To find product information or to become an AireSpring partner or agent, please visit www.airespring.com or contact us at 888-389-2899.