



HOSTED VOICE GUIDE


PURECLOUD
TELECOMS & CLOUD BASED SOLUTIONS



Hosted Telephony Guide

Welcome to 'Understanding Hosted Telephony',

This guide is designed to help you to discover how to help customers get more from their communications systems.

Hosted telephony.

- Explaining the basic concepts so you can see how they apply to your business.
- Outlining key opportunities and benefits so you can see what is possible.
- Advising on the best approach to move forward, helping you to make the right decisions for your business and avoid common pitfalls.
- Guiding you on how to save time and money and get more from your everyday business communications.

Getting The Basics Right

Introducing Hosted Telephony

Voice over broadband, Internet Telephony, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). There are many different names for the simple notion of using data connections to make and receive voice calls. This can cause confusion about the services that are available and whether they are suitable for business use. This guide is to help who are considering the benefits of upgrading or replacing their existing telephone systems and may have multiple sites to connect. But Hosted Telephony represents the future for voice services and can provide both immediate and longer term benefits. Until recently, only larger organisations could contemplate the cost of 'going IP'. But, with the explosive growth of broadband and mobile technologies and the near-limitless capacities of networks, business-grade IP-based telephone systems are now available tailor-made for even the smallest businesses. Ovum – one of Europe's leading advisers on the impact of new technologies – reports that 15 per cent of UK businesses are already using Hosted Telephony and that will have grown to 40 percent within the next two years.

Working with a converged network

Bringing your voice and data networks together is commonly called 'convergence'. Convergence means you no longer need separate infrastructures and processes to support phones, computers and smart phones or to link up different locations – everything is based on Internet Protocol (IP), the technology at the heart of the internet. Convergence enables you to bring your voice and data communications together in new ways that can help you improve efficiency, reduce costs and help you serve your customers more effectively. All Hosted Telephony – both consumer VoIP services and business-grade Hosted Telephony – works in the same way. Instead of sending voice signals down a telephone line, the signals are broken into data packets, sent across a data network (the internet or a company network) and reassembled at the other end. All your voice, data and multimedia services can be carried in the same way, so you only have one network and technology to support.

Hosted Telephony on a converged network

Hosted Telephony provides voice telephony services on an IP-based Local Area Network (LAN) installed at your premises. The LAN can also link your data communications and your business systems. You can choose to extend Hosted Telephony to remote sites, offices and home workers using either a Wide Area Network (WAN) or a Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection, and provide the same systems and services to staff at each location. Hosted Telephony systems are scalable and cater easily for your changing needs as your business grows. As part of a converged network, Hosted Telephony can help your organisation improve efficiency, linking all your people – in the office, at home, at remote sites and locations, or on the road – with each other and to all your organisation's offices, systems, files and processes.

Hosted Telephony can help you to:

- Extend the boundaries of your office network to cater for expansion and to include new sites and home and remote workers.
- Rationalise, reorganise or relocate sites and offices more easily.
- Increase productivity by supporting hotdesking and, with suitable network connections, support home and remote working.
- Reduce costs by consolidating the number of telephone lines you use and by providing free calls between sites on your network.

Don't let the language put you off – you can find straightforward definitions of technical terms in the Glossary at the end of this guide and more at our website www.purecloudsolutions.com



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What is Hosted Telephony?

At the simplest level, Hosted Telephony is just telephony – but with the option of a multitude of additional features and services that can enhance your customer service and your internal communications and bring new flexibility to the way you work.

- Hosted Telephony supports all the features you'd expect from a modern telephone system and provides the single infrastructure, ease of networking and ongoing management changes that an IP platform provides.
- New programmable IP phones can give people real control of their communications and voicemail, making it easier for them to respond quickly to customers and colleagues even when moving around in the workplace. Some IP handsets can also send and receive data and even video so you don't always need access to a PC.
- You retain all the voicemail, call barring, call on hold, call forwarding and speed-dialling services you are used to and – via call tracking – gain new insight into how your communications resources can be used more effectively.
- You can make cost savings on calls on your business network and may be able to save even more by rationalising the number of lines you need.

With Hosted Telephony, even the smallest businesses can deliver a professional response to every call, minimising the risk that you'll lose messages and business and helping you to maximise productivity. To help you get more from your existing infrastructure without major capital spending, you can easily add new applications and bandwidth and link new devices and locations in phases, as your business grows.

Consumer VoIP or Hosted Telephony – what's the difference?

There are significant differences between consumer VoIP services and business-grade Hosted Telephony. VoIP can help the 'one-manband' business but has security and quality limitations – your calls travel unsecured over the public internet – and it cannot match the range of features and services that Hosted Telephony offers. Businesses require a consistently high and reliable quality of service for voice calls and need to be sure that calls remain confidential. Making phone calls should not slow down your emails or applications and downloading data shouldn't mean you get a jerky or intermittent voice service – with Hosted Telephony, the network is set to give voice calls priority.

Benefiting from Hosted Telephony

Hosted Telephony delivers significant benefits in its own right and also opens the door to future change in the way your business works. Hosted Telephony can help you to introduce:

Future-proofing

Hosted service providers are concentrating investment in the development of functionality and traditional systems can't keep pace. Hosted Telephony represents the future.

- Scalable expansion of systems and capacity to match growth
- Easy integration of new applications, services and devices, support for home and remote working and integration of mobile phones, tablets & laptops.

Cost savings

Hosted Telephony may help you achieve cost savings whilst continuing to exploit your existing investments. In the longer term, converging all your data and voice services can help reduce the total cost of your communications.

- Calls on your network and between your linked sites are free
- Consolidate line usage and charges
- Reduced call charges for linked home and remote workers
- Reduced network maintenance and support costs.



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Simplified management

- Centralised, PC-based network administration, configuration and security
- Single contract, single bill for all services
- Single contact for all maintenance and support
- Reduced dependence on specialist skills.

Improved productivity

Hosted Telephony can help improve both staff and network productivity.

- Consolidate the number of phone lines you use and ensure effective use of your communications resources
- Empower staff with new tools such as sophisticated IP phones or handheld tablets that can capture and send data as well as support voice services
- Simplify network and system maintenance and support contracts and management
- Streamline routine administration and day to day network management
- Allow company applications and services to be accessed via the screens on certain IP phones, so employees who do not have PCs can access productivity-enhancing applications and services.

Greater flexibility

With traditional systems, change requires planning and triggers disruption in the workplace. With Hosted Telephony, change is software-controlled and you can connect an IP phone and a PC anywhere you have access to your LAN cabling and reconfigure from a PC as you need. Add wireless connectivity (WLAN) and every part of your workplace will be in touch and within reach.

- Simplifies day to day changes, moves and adds
- More effective use of office space
- Easy to integrate new offices or sites
- Helps support flexible working at home and on the move.

Better customer service

The first impression your customers get is the one that counts and we all know how frustrating it is listening to a ringing tone when you want help. Hosted Telephony systems can automatically answer and route customer calls, reducing potential annoyance.

- Speedy and professional call answering, handling and management with automated self-select options and recorded announcements
- Easier, more reliable contact with named individuals and teams.

Gateway to the future

Once you have introduced Hosted Telephony on a converged network, you have a platform that can support a range of integrated IP applications such as:

- Converged fixed-mobile services, so your people can make calls using your network wherever they are
- Real-time communications, where voicemail & email messages are all brought together and delivered instantly on a PC, mobile phone or tablet as the user prefers
- Integration of telephony into standard business applications on your PCs, allowing 'click and dial' from your directories or email applications on your PC
- Secure remote access from home or on the road to all your usual business information, applications and services
- Integrated web, video and audio conferencing and video telephony across your sites, with customers and suppliers, supporting collaboration and virtual teamworking
- Physical security services such as remote monitoring of CCTV over IP and door entry systems.



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Some myths about IP Telephony

“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”

With older telephone systems, maintenance can become difficult and costly. They can’t provide advanced applications which link with the internet or video and many will not be able to support the more sophisticated services the future will bring. And they’re inflexible – any change requires planning. Hosted Telephony brings flexibility to voice services, helping improve service to customers and efficiency in the workplace. Converged networks offer a potential ‘triple whammy’ of improved services, cost reductions and productivity gains that suggests every business needs to plan for ‘going IP’.

“IP systems are more vulnerable to hackers”

Any system, whatever its technology base, can be subject to attack or misuse – unauthorised access, fraud and abuse are well-known issues even in traditional telephony systems. Privacy, protection and control must all be addressed and IP enables you to do this at every level – network, systems and applications – to give you the in-depth defence your business needs. Solutions should also be protected by built-in firewalls.

“Standards for IP are still evolving – I’d be better off waiting”

People worry that IP is just a new technology that may soon be overtaken by the next ‘flavour of the month’, leaving them stuck up a technology backwater. But fundamental IP standards are in place and have been for some time. BT recognises that the future is IP and is investing up to £10 billion over five years to IP-enable all of their networks. ‘Going IP’ is the right choice now and for the future.

“A phone’s just a phone – whether it’s traditional or IP doesn’t matter”

The difference that Hosted Telephony can make goes beyond how signals are carried over a network. IP phones are feature rich, offering the user real control of calls as well as the option to access company applications and services without the need for a PC. All today’s voice, broadband, wireless, data and text communications are IP-based and a converged network can help you link your people with your files and processes. IP phones range from simple digital handsets and headsets to desktop phones that support videoconferencing and data transfers.

“I’ll be tied to a single supplier”

IP’s interoperability means you are not ‘locked in’ to one provider. All major manufacturers work closely with applications and services providers such as Microsoft to ensure easy integration.

“It means tearing everything out and starting again”

Replacing your existing network and systems may be the right approach for your business, but it’s not the only way. You can phase the integration of your traditional PBX, voicemail and directory systems with Hosted Telephony services, maximising your return on investment and retiring them when no longer required.

You will need to cable your workplace or install a wireless LAN for full IP but this need not disrupt your business. A wide range of new desktop or cordless IP phones give users valuable control over the communications services they use. IP phones can also provide access to other networked services and applications that you make available in future, including options such as dialling voice calls direct from a PC, providing broadband internet access or introducing applications to support stock and order management.



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When should I change to IP Telephony?

The 'right' time is different for every business but Hosted Telephony can help every business succeed. The most common trigger for change is realising that your current system can't cope with the volumes of calls and types of messages you need to handle and can't respond to your changing business needs. You might also be thinking about extending or moving premises or simply need to increase the flexibility and mobility of your workforce.

"We need to replace obsolete infrastructures and systems."

Many older telephone systems have size limits and further extension is impossible. The cost of maintenance and enhancement may also make it economically preferable to start again using today's technologies. A lack of functionality in your phone system can make even the most straightforward of activities – taking, delivering and responding to messages from customers and colleagues – an expensive nightmare for everyone, especially in a growing company. Hosted Telephony can provide a professional solution for your voice services and, by linking with your data and applications, provide access to business information and applications that can help to improve productivity.

"We're relocating, opening a new office or opening a customer service centre."

Moving premises is an ideal time to introduce Hosted Telephony as you can easily install cabling to all areas to maximise future flexible use of the space. If you are opening a new linked office or adding an existing office to your network, you won't need a separate phone system at each location – one central system provides the full service. Giving a professional response to every call can change how customers rate your business and Hosted Telephony helps ensure that calls aren't kept waiting and are routed to the right place.

"We need to find more cost efficient ways of operating."

It is more economical to run one network than multiple networks and the more services you run over your IP network, the quicker your investment pays off. You need only one source of expertise and maintenance for all your systems, saving on expensive technical support and multiple contracts. Management and administration are centralised and streamlined – the entire network is monitored and secured and is reconfigurable from a PC located anywhere on the network. You'll save on calls between your networked sites – this can include people working from home – and from using conferencing and shared working options to reduce the need for business travel.

"We need to include flexible workers in our network."

Most businesses have owners, managers and employees who work from home or who are regularly on the move. You need to be able to contact them instantly and they need secure access to customer, product, ordering and billing information as if they were in the office. More advanced Hosted Telephony applications over a converged network can get messages to your people wherever they are and allow them to check and respond to emails and other messages from home, whilst commuting or on their way to meetings. Hosted Telephony supports hotdesking too, which makes it easy to include flexible workers in the workplace. All home or remote workers need do when visiting the office is plug their phone and laptop into a network socket and log in – the system will recognise them and provide access to the services they need.



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Implementing IP Telephony – making the case

It's easy to see that Hosted Telephony run over a converged voice and data network is the best technology solution, but it is another thing to be sure that an investment will deliver a rapid and adequate return with both strategic and financial value. This section is designed to help you build a business case and evaluate the benefits of Hosted Telephony for your business. You should consider four categories of costs:

1. Reduced hardware, software and maintenance costs

Businesses with more than one site can consolidate their networks, eliminating overlapping equipment, lines and facilities and maintenance expenses. Connections between your offices can be made on your internal network to avoid call charges. You no longer need a PBX at each site – all company telephony can be controlled from a single cloud based location, helping reduce management and maintenance costs and helping save both money and management effort.

2. Reduced network management costs

Your calculation should also include the ongoing expenses associated with managing your existing voice network, maintaining equipment, administering user changes and supporting business growth. You could reduce network management costs as IP networks and systems are simpler to administer in house or by opting for a managed service. Hosted Telephony requires no routine maintenance and troubleshooting so you'll be less dependent on potentially expensive external expertise.

3. Improved line usage

By making more efficient use of communications lines, Hosted Telephony also cuts recurring service provider costs for traditional voice services between your sites. Long distance calls between your sites can also be carried over the internal network at no cost, though you may need to buy additional bandwidth. The ability to use the data network to carry voice traffic allows you to cut other voice circuit costs, reducing the need for private circuits and leased lines to interconnect your telephony and voicemail systems.

4. Increased productivity for users and IT staff

The savings generated by improvements in productivity for users are less easy to predict but an estimate can be made by looking at a number of factors.

- Users – reduced 'telephone tag'; anytime, anywhere access to telephony features for mobile workers; more efficient, easier to use features for call handling; integrated voicemail and email messaging, delivered wherever you are; ability to integrate communications with core business applications.
- IT staff – less travel to remote sites; single voice and data network is easier to manage; fewer support staff required; reduced training needs; less time managing spares.
- Organisation – improved customer satisfaction from better call handling and responsiveness; more effective use of call centre or customer service agents; selected data and applications on phone display.



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Glossary of technical terms

Hotdesking – providing shared space and facilities in the workplace for occasional use by visiting home and remote workers.

IP – Internet Protocol; the standards, rules and processes that enable voice and data to be transmitted over networks.

IPT – IP Telephony.

IVR – Interactive Voice Response; an automated system that helps route calls.

LAN – Local Area Network; the wired connections and equipment that make up a site or data network.

Laptop – a portable PC.

PC – a desktop Personal Computer.

PBX – Private Branch Exchange; a traditional office or organisation telephony system.

VoIP – Voice over Internet Protocol consumer services use a broadband connection to carry telephony services.

VPN – a Virtual Private Network extends an organisation's network to outlying office or home locations.

WAN – a Wide Area Network connects a number of LANs.

WLAN – a Wireless Local Area Network enables wireless voice and data connections within a site or office.

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