

What Is VoIP, and Why Is It Important?

As a small business owner, you're always looking for ways to use space more efficiently, increase productivity, and reduce your costs.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) can help you do just that. With just a headset and a computer with an Internet connection, your business can save money on phone bills and hardware, and you can enjoy additional functions that a regular phone service might not be able to provide.

Although the term might be unfamiliar, chances are you've experienced VoIP technology before. If you've ever used Skype, Xbox Live, or FaceTime (just to name a few examples), then you've used VoIP.

The simplest way to describe VoIP is that it's phone service delivered over the Internet, as opposed to traditional analog services (what everyone calls *landlines* now) that rely on extra wiring, additional hardware, and a phone company. Instead, VoIP works through your existing computers and your high-speed Internet connection.

This technology, which was developed by gamers who wanted to be able to have real-time communications with each other, is also called IP telephony, Internet telephony, broadband telephony, and broadband phone service. In addition to allowing people to make phone calls through the Internet, it can make international phone calls, video conferencing, call forwarding to smartphones and desktops, and other types of business communications easier to do.

Let's take a look at 5 common questions about VoIP and the answers to them.

How Does VoIP Work?

This technology takes audio signals (your voice) and converts them into digital ones. With a VoIP phone, you can make calls directly over the Internet, reducing or eliminating the need to use a traditional telephone service.

Because it bundles voice signals into "packets," VoIP is able to transmit more information over a network, thereby also making it more efficient than traditional telephone services.

What Equipment Do I Need?

There's a misconception that VoIP phone systems require expensive equipment. In fact, they don't, and if you already have a phone, a computer, and a fast Internet connection, you already have the bare minimum. All you need in addition to that is to sign up for a VoIP service. The

provider may also offer a virtual number service, enabling a user to take and make Internet calls directly from a phone.

Depending on your needs, you may also want to get one or more of the following: a headset, microphone, webcam (or a computer with a built-in camera), analog telephone adapter (if you're integrating the system with your landlines), online faxing capability, or an IP conference phone.

Of course, adding that additional equipment will make things more expensive, but remember that some or all of it may not be necessary. Again, you only need what your business requires. Somelike H Grant Designs can help you assess your needs and determine what equipment will be required for support.

What are the benefits of Using a VoIP system?

There are four principal benefits to a VoIP phone system: flexibility, mobility, affordability, and security.

- **Flexibility**-- The advanced features that VoIP systems offer deliver more flexibility and agility than analog systems do. The more employees you have, the more sense it makes to go with VoIP phones to increase productivity in daily communications, especially for a business with a great number of contacts or which makes a lot of long-distance calls. You can also have all those additional features (and more) that we talked about at the start.
- **Mobility**-- With a strong and fast broadband connection, VoIP phones present outstanding mobility. Basically, you can conduct business anywhere-- home, office, car, hotel, etc. Having to miss an important call because you're away from the office becomes far less of a worry. One of the best things of all is that with VoIP technology, you can transfer calls from a cell phone to an office line with no hiccups at all.
- **Affordability**-- VoIP phones reduce costs because you don't need to rely on a traditional analog service that you have separate accounts and expenses for. They also save your business money because long-distance and international calls and faxes are typically free or cheaper than they are through analog services. Many features that come with a VoIP service would cost extra with an analog provider. VoIP phones also save on data costs and usage because they only use the data required for the specific function.
- **Security**-- As long as you choose a responsible VoIP provider, these systems are more secure than landlines are. When looking for a provider, you should be asking things such as what their accreditation is, how many data security centers they have, whether they offer system status updates, what security software and infrastructure they use, and whether they are HIPAA-compliant. Finally, notice if they make a point of broadcasting their prioritization of user security. And company will say they do if asked, but notice if the company advertises it *without* being asked.

Is VoIP Service Reliable?

When this technology was newer, reliability was inconsistent. Dropped calls, delays, and voice drop-outs were common complaints. However, with advances since then, call quality is much better and can be as crisp and clear as on a landline depending on your network.

One drawback that does still exist is that emergency calls when the system is down cannot go through. You'll still need a landline or a cell phone for that. Also, virtual numbers aren't associated with a physical location, so a call to 911 won't let responders know where you are based on that alone.

Do I Really Need To Switch to VoIP?

The truth is that the answer really depends on the business and its needs. VoIP is not for everyone, but in today's technology-driven world, it will work for most businesses. The benefits in mobility, versatility, reliability, and cost savings keep getting better and better, and many more businesses are making the switch.

H Grant Designs, serving businesses in the Bergen County area, where most firms are switching to VoIP or incorporating it into their existing systems, can help you determine if VoIP is right for your business and can get you set up. We'll make sure that your employees and customers can stay connected, that you can unify your communications, and that your company can save money.

Just [contact us here](#) to request a quote or get more information from our experts!

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