

Choices when it comes to your communications infrastructure

A BUYER'S GUIDE TO IP-BASED SOLUTIONS



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Introduction

A small business has many priorities. With so much on your mind, your phone system might be something that you haven't thought about in a while. Perhaps you have a few phone lines or a trunk that connect to a system like a private branch exchange (PBX). It seems to do the job, but are there other alternatives out there that might help your business save money and be more productive?

In a word, yes. For many years, phone systems with sophisticated features were only available to bigger businesses that had the capital to make a large up-front investment in equipment 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 that technology has not only increased capabilities, but dropped the price to a point where virtually any business can take advantage.

This paper is designed to help you understand your options and make the best choice for your business. When you break it down, there are three main types of products based on VoIP technology that are available to you. They are:

- **IP Trunking** – these products allow you to continue to use your existing phone system, but use Internet Protocol (IP) to drive cost savings.
- **IP-PBX** – this is a modern, IP-based variant of a traditional phone system that you purchase, install at your business location, and manage.
- **Hosted PBX** – this is a service that delivers phone system functionality from a network, or cloud-based platform. You pay for the service monthly with little or no capital investment.

Let us examine these options in greater detail:

IP Trunking

One of the simplest ways for a small business to switch to VoIP is IP-based Trunking (sometimes called Business Trunking or Integrated Access). This solution allows a business to take advantage of the benefits of VoIP without replacing their existing phone system.

In an IP Trunking solution, voice and data are generally carried over a single circuit with part of the circuit used for voice, the other part for data. Because voice is very sensitive to delays phone calls always take priority over Internet traffic or email.

Some of the benefits of IP 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+%.
- **No Capital Costs** – These solutions allow businesses to use their existing phones and phone system so there are generally no upfront charges.

- **Predictable Operating Expense** – Monthly voice and data charges appear on one bill and in general have pretty 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.

The biggest negative – since the business is using existing equipment, there’s no new functionality to help your business run better. If you have an aging phone system, IP Trunking is pretty much a temporary solution – at some point you’ll need to replace it.

IP-PBX

Purchasing a new phone system is a logical step in improving your communications infrastructure. These newer generation phone systems, IP-PBX’s, 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 – it requires you to buy the phone system, new phones, and have it installed. These purchases can easily add up to thousands of dollars (\$10,000+ is not uncommon). Yes, that cost can be financed, but you need to consider whether you want to buy and own a piece of depreciating equipment.

Some other considerations you might have when purchasing an IP-PBX are:

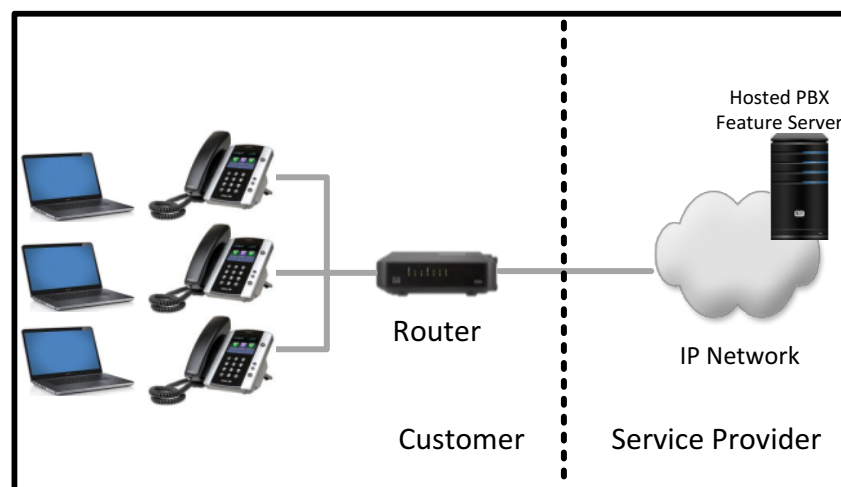
- **Obsolescence** – Like any other piece of equipment, an IP-PBX can become outdated. An IP-PBX can be updated and upgraded, but it will cost money. And, eventually, just like with an old PC, there comes a time when upgrading isn’t possible.
- **Business Continuity** – Since the IP-PBX will reside in your facility, anything that might happen in and around it – a power outage, a natural disaster, etc. – will affect your ability to send and receive calls.

Hosted PBX

Hosted 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 hosts and manages the phone system in 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 PBX are:

- **Low or No Capital Costs** – Since there is no equipment to purchase, the up-front costs are limited – and often these 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 your costs will increase.
- **No Maintenance Expenses** – Because the service provider owns the equipment, they are responsible of all the costs associated with maintenance.
- **Business Continuity** – Since the phone system resides in a secure facility with safeguards like back-up power and equipment, events at your location (such as a power outage) would not affect your business. You can simply and quickly configure the service to have the calls routed to an alternate number (such as another location, home, or mobile device).
- **No Obsolescence** – The service provider hosting the system will routinely upgrade the service so that new enhancements are delivered on an ongoing basis.



Hosted PBX diagram

Hosted PBX from E+ Business Solutions

E+ Business Solutions is proud to make Hosted PBX available to its customers. We see the future as one where businesses anywhere can reap greater performance benefits at a lower cost by moving to a cloud based solution. Hosted Voice is a Hosted PBX that makes an incredible array of features and capabilities available at a fraction of the cost of an on-site phone system.

Benefits

Hosted PBX is truly the last phone system you'll ever need. It delivers best-in-class capabilities at a price that are affordable for all. As described earlier, a hosted approach has a lot of advantages. In addition to those, here are a few others:

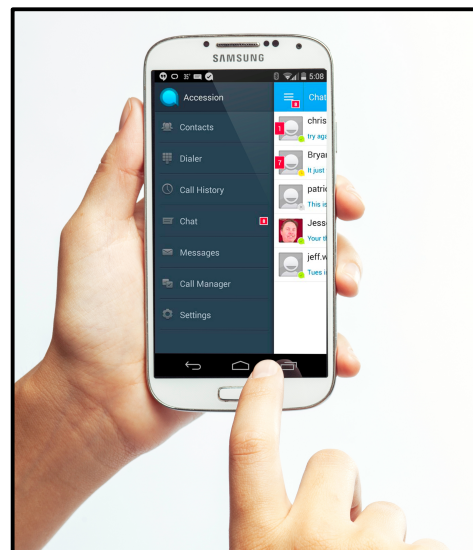
A bundled price for everything you need to run your business. Hosted PBX includes everything you need to support the voice and data needs of your business. There are no hidden costs – you simply pay a flat rate per employee per month and that's it. As your business expands, you can simply add new users to your account.

Big business features. Hosted PBX provides you all the features you need and then some. If you're on an older system today, you'll be thrilled with the functionality that's available in Hosted PBX. Included are the features you'd expect – call transfer, voicemail, call forwarding, and the like. However, what really makes Hosted PBX exciting are capabilities such as:

- **Mobility.** Our mobility package, Accession, allows you to integrate your mobile device, tablet, or laptop into Hosted Voice. Accession includes downloadable clients for:
 - Windows based laptops/desktop computers
 - Android-based mobile devices and tablets
 - Apple devices and tablets (iPhone, iPad, Macbook)

Accession integrates your mobile device with desk phone functions and enables you to send and receive calls from any device connected to the Internet. You can also do Instant Messaging, Video Chat, integrate with Microsoft Outlook, and move active calls between devices.

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.



Accession Mobile App

Have an employee that's out of the office a lot of the day? With the click of a mouse, a user can take advantage of Hosted PBX's powerful remote office capabilities to have their desk phone and mobile phone ring simultaneously, or use the mobile client to receive calls anywhere. 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.** E+ Business Solutions is located where you are. Should there ever be a question or problem, our trained staff will solve it to your satisfaction – quickly. Compare that to other providers that serve customers with an 800 number in another state or even another country and you'll understand why local is better.
- **Voice Quality and Security.** Since Hosted PBX is a service that's fully managed, we ensure a superior experience. This is not a product that uses the commercial internet to route voice calls. With Hosted Voice, end-to-end quality and security are assured. All calls are routed over our managed network to give your calls highest quality.

Conclusion

There are a lot of options out there when looking at a phone system. It may seem like the status quo – no change – is the safest bet. However, the pace of technology has now made possible an impressive array of capabilities available to small business that was previously only available to larger ones. Now might be the right time to evaluate your needs and see if new capabilities might help your business be more productive. You might find you can make a big jump forward while spending pretty much what you're spending today or even saving money.

With Hosted PBX, E+ Business Solutions is delivering a best-in-class phone system with no up-front costs that allows you to buy only what you need. We take care of all the details – phones, equipment, installation, training, and ongoing service – so you can focus on your business. Best of all: we're right here in Jackson – we're available around the clock to help solve any problems you might have.

Call us today at to find out how Hosted PBX can help your business, or get more information at www.eplusbusiness.com