

Not just for enterprises

VoIP solutions offer added value for small businesses.

Is your traditional phone system keeping up with your growing business? If your company could benefit from such advances as automatic call forwarding, digital voice mail and built-in disaster recovery, it may be time to consider Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

“With VoIP, you have a lot of functionality that will support your business, even in the event that something happens at your location,” says Frank Ruffolo, Senior Vice President at CIMCO Communications.

Smart Business asked Ruffolo about what VoIP can do for businesses of all sizes.

Is VoIP technology right for every small business?

Voice over Internet Protocol is one of the most heavily adopted new technologies in voice and data communications. Rather than transmitting voice over traditional analog phone lines, VoIP packages voice and digital data and transfers it over data networks.

VoIP is not just for large corporations anymore. For small businesses, VoIP technology can be a way of integrating, streamlining and lowering the costs of their overall communications. Companies with small remote offices, telecommuters, moderate Internet use or significant outgoing calls can be great candidates for VoIP. With the ability to outsource, any business can have VoIP.

What key factors should a company consider before selecting a VoIP solution?

Start with determining what internal resources you have available to deploy a VoIP solution. Consider the current status of technology expertise your company possesses and decide whether or not you have the ability to run the application in-house or will need to partner with an experienced carrier.

In either scenario, when selecting a carrier-grade solution, take the time to interview potential partners and verify their experience in deploying these types of services.



Frank Ruffolo
Senior Vice President
CIMCO Communications

What benefits do small businesses stand to gain from implementing a VoIP solution?

Most importantly, there are built-in disaster recovery options with VoIP. Imagine your circuit goes down, and there's no dial tone at the office. In traditional telephony, anyone who is calling your office would be getting a busy signal. He or she is not able to connect with you at all. With some VoIP solutions, the calls are rerouted to another phone number anywhere and at a minimum are going to a voicemail box.

VoIP provides your business with flexibility. Some providers offer the 'find me, follow me' functionality, which requires only one number to call to reach the user. For example, if you leave the office, you can have all of your calls routed to your cell phone; if your cell phone is busy, the calls go back to your office voice mail.

Another benefit is unified messaging. Since VoIP is really an application going over a company's data network, it is very easy to integrate other services. Voice and e-mail can be delivered on one network, which allows carriers to bundle services more aggressively. In the traditional phone world, the same solution would require a

separate circuit for each voice and data application.

VoIP also provides an enhanced messaging functionality that provides an unlimited list of new features and functions not always available in traditional solutions. You can actually receive your voice mail via e-mail.

Lastly, a commonly recognized benefit is long distance cost savings. Depending on the type of business, a majority of calling may happen between offices. It's called an in-network call and with a VoIP solution there's no charge for those calls.

What are some common misconceptions about VoIP?

VoIP solutions are more popular than ever. From residential to business, every company has a different story about their solution, so make sure you take the time to determine fact from fiction. One common misconception is that the quality of service suffers. Not all carriers have Quality of Service (QoS) standards in place that ensure that your voice is taking priority over your data and that your data arrives in the correct order. Another misconception is that voice quality is lower compared to traditional solutions. QoS and network technology advancement have improved and removed voice quality as an issue.

How does a small business owner go about selecting a VoIP partner?

With VoIP, it's important to choose an established provider who has proven success in implementing and servicing this new technology. It's in your best interest to ask the service provider tough questions to determine whether it is the right partner for your business. How long have you been in business? How long have you been providing VoIP? How many VoIP customers have you deployed? Who are your underlying network providers? The answers to these questions will help you find the right VoIP provider and get the best solution for your business. <<

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