

TeleDynamic | *we get it*
COMMUNICATIONS

 **ShoreTel**[®]

vs.


digium[®]
Switchvox[®]

A Cost Comparison Guide

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Introduction

The intent of this comparison guide is to provide you with objective, well-researched information of two phone system providers for the SMB market – Shoretel and Digium Switchvox.

While both PBX systems have their merits, they do take different approaches in technology and architecture. Shoretel has a highly-controlled and proprietary system approach while Digium chooses to utilize an architecture based upon open source and current telecommunications standards. The contrasts brought about by these different philosophies are dramatic.

Because we know it's important to you, we focus primarily on cost comparisons in this guide. If you're looking for a detailed explanation of features and capabilities, there are many other sources of information available on the Shoretel and Digium websites.

We hope this guide will help you make an informed buying decision that's based on useful cost information and not marketing hyperbole.

Company Overview



Shoretel was founded in 1996 and is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California. They are a provider of commercial, closed-source VoIP products targeted to businesses from 10 to 20,000 users.

Current implementations of ShoreTel systems include IP based telephone handsets and desktop and mobile communications applications for users. Unified communications applications include instant messaging, video and desktop collaboration, as well as voicemail servers, solid state Linux based appliances, and other telecommunications-related software applications.

Shoretel is a public company (NASDAQ: SHOR) and to-date has yet to deliver a profitable quarter.



Digium was founded in 1999 and is headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama. Their products can be grouped into two categories: business phone systems and custom telephony solutions.

The business phone system product line is a range of server appliances running Switchvox, a Unified Communications System powered by Asterisk.

Custom telephony solutions comprise digital and analog interface cards, echo canceling and transcoding hardware, and the open source Asterisk software which allows companies to build custom business telephony systems using free, open source software.

The company is privately held and has been profitable since 2002.

Core Features

PBX Models

These tables provide a comparison of the core PBX models for Shoretel and Switchvox.

Shoretel	Price	Phones Supported	Conference Bridge Paths	Voice Mail
Voice Switch 30	\$1,595	30#	0	0
Voice Switch 50*	\$2,495	50#	6	0/50*
Voice Switch 90*	\$3,695	90#	12	0/90*
Voice Switch 220T1	\$5,595	70 – 220	0	0

•Voice mail is an option on the models 50 & 90. Pricing shows voice mail-equipped unit

Voice Switches can be added to provide more capacity, up to 10,000 users

Switchvox	Price	Phones Supported	Conference Bridge Paths	Voice Mail
60	\$1,645	20	5	Unlimited
65	\$3,140	30	5	Unlimited
305	\$4,040	150	15	Unlimited
355	\$5,850	400	30	Unlimited
450	\$9,850	500	45	Unlimited
470	\$12,975	600	50	Unlimited



Trunking Costs

Shoretel's price for a T1/PRI card is nearly five times the price of the same component in a Switchvox.

	Shoretel	Switchvox
T1/PRI Hardware	\$3,495	\$730

For SIP trunking, the Shoretel system requires specialized third party hardware called a session border controller plus they charge a license fee per trunk. SIP trunking is native in the Switchvox system.

	Shoretel	Switchvox
License (per SIP trunk)	\$50	0
SIP Hardware	\$1,600 - \$7,700	NA

Dedicated Server Requirements

This table provides a comparison of the hardware requirements on both systems. Shoretel uses servers for many of its various applications while the Switchvox has the applications built into its core PBX.

	Shoretel	Switchvox
SIP Trunking	InSIParator (proprietary)	None
Call Center	Microsoft Server	Not required
Unified Messaging	Linux Appliance	Not required
Mobile/PBX Convergence	Mobility Router Appliance	Not required
Teleworking	Microsoft Server	Not required
IM	Linux Appliance	Not required
VPN Concentrator	Edgewater Appliance	Not required



Software Costs

Both systems include the system software in the cost of the hardware. Client software is sold as licenses in Shoretel's case and as subscriptions on the Switchvox.

	Shoretel	Switchvox
Extension	\$140	NA
Mailbox	\$90	NA
Extension & Mailbox	\$200	\$60
SIP Device License	\$30	NA
Mobile Access License	\$90	NA



Conferencing

In addition to the Shoretel built-in audio conferencing capabilities (six paths on the 60 and 12 paths on the 90), Shoretel offers separate conference software. This software must run on a separate “service appliance”.

Switchvox provides built-in audio conferencing, with the number of paths determined by the particular model of PBX

	Shoretel	Switchvox
Service Appliance	\$2,336	Not Required
Basic Audio Conference Bridge – 12 paths	\$9,300	5-50 paths included in base PBX
Audio Conference Bridge – 12 path add-on	\$7,000	5-50 paths included in base PBX



Call Center

Shoretel offers a robust call center solution, but it comes with a high price. Switchvox offers a built-in call center but it's not as robust as the Shoretel offering.

Large call centers will be better served by the Shoretel, while smaller, less formal call center needs can be met with the less expensive Switchvox offering.

	Shoretel	Switchvox
Agent License	\$295	Inc.
Supervisor License	\$595	Inc.
Call Recording License	\$5,000/5 concurrent calls	Inc.
Call Center Reporting	\$3,713 - \$7,425	Inc.



Additional Features

Telephones

Shoretel offers an extensive family of nine desk phones, a cordless phone and a Shoretel “Dock” that allows an iPhone to plug into a unit that transforms it into a desk phone. Prices range from \$149 to \$695.

Digium manufactures three phones, ranging from \$189 to \$299, but that's the only beginning of choices. Switchvox is built on the SIP (session initiated protocol) standard and as such, is compatible with any number of SIP phones from manufacturers such as Polycom, Aastra, Yealink, Panasonic, Grandstream and Snom. Prices for SIP phones ranges from \$79 to over \$1,000 for a top-of-the-line Polycom color video phone.

Softphones

Softphones are software that turn a PC equipped with a headset into a telephone.

Shoretel requires a \$30 license to enable a SIP-based device. Switchvox has native software phone support.



CRM Integration

Shoretel can integrate with Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics and NetSuite. The license cost is \$200 per user.

Switchvox can integrate with Salesforce and SugarCRM. It is included at no extra cost.

Server Maintenance

The Shoretel solution is comprised of several servers, both proprietary and windows-based. Upgrades must be maintained on all of the servers and application software.

The Switchvox is a single appliance. Upgrades are simply applied to one box.

Ease of Installation

Shoretel's tagline is "brilliantly simple" and in comparison to old PBX technology, their product is easier to install, configure and maintain. However, it's all relative. Shoretel has a multiplicity of servers, gateways, and routers. Their technical training consists of 13 different classes with three levels of certification.

Switchvox is a single appliance solution with a simple unified management portal. Complete product training and certification takes two days.



Ongoing Support Costs

It's industry knowledge that PBX manufacturers charge approximately 12% of the original equipment cost for annual support.

As the Switchvox is 10% to 60% less expensive than a like-configured Shoretel, the ongoing support costs will also reflect these same savings. In addition, the Switchvox has one appliance to maintain while the Shoretel has up to seven separate servers to maintain.

Conclusions

Shoretel

Pros: The Shoretel system is feature rich and provides real value to organizations with complex telecommunications needs. Shoretel is known for their resiliency story. Their integrations with other applications is robust. Finally, the product can scale into the thousands of users (although few large Shoretel installations exist).

Cons: The Shoretel system is a 1990's approach to the PBX, being very hardware intensive and laden with a complex and expensive licensing scheme. The system is proprietary and requires expensive adapters and licenses to integrate with today's telecom standard of SIP. The product and ongoing support is very expensive.

Conclusion: The Shoretel system impresses with its massive feature list, ability to scale to thousands of users and high level data integrations. For companies with complex feature requirements, dozens of branch offices and the need for centralized management system, the Shoretel is an excellent choice.

Conclusions

Switchvox

Pros: The Switchvox system is a software-oriented solution that provides all of its features and functionality on a single appliance. Being based on open source and the SIP standard, it does away with expensive proprietary technology. There are no Switchvox licenses. The system and oncoming support is very affordable.

Cons: The Switchvox system is not all things for all businesses. For complex applications such as advanced call centers and integration with NetSuite and Microsoft Lync, the Switchvox doesn't provide these specialized features. The product will only scale to 600 users at a single location (at this time).

Conclusion: The Switchvox is a capable, mature and robust product for small to medium sized businesses. It has all of today's common telecommunications features and some features that no one else offers) and is a snap to install and maintain. For the vast majority of small businesses, the Switchvox is a better fit for today's value-driven business, with a reasonable price tag, no expensive licensing and minimal hardware to maintain.

Digium Switchvox leverages the power and cost-savings of open source and telephony standards to deliver a superior small business solution.



Sources

1. [ShoreTel Corporation](#)
2. [Digium Corporation](#)
3. [Edgewater Networks](#)
4. [Ingate Systems](#)
5. [PEPPM](#)
6. [Salesforce Corporation](#)
7. [Spiceworks](#)

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