VoIP Transitions &

the 4VOICE difference

Why you should migrate to a VoIP Solution?

Traditional phone lines and phone systems have reached the end-of-the road. The infrastructure and networks these systems rely on were built 20+ years ago and are encroaching obsolescence. Telephone carriers have already signaled that they plan to exit the land-line business due to the significant migration of users away from this technology. Such can be exemplified by Verizon requesting to provide solely wireless service to certain locations affected by Hurricane Sandy, due to the cost of repairing the traditional land line infrastructure. While this request was denied by the FCC, they did approve two trials by rival AT&T for "next generation," non-land line service.

Aside from their uncertain future, archaic land-line systems suffer from several important limitations:

- The total number of calls possible is limited by the number of lines (or channels) available. This forces users to size their systems for "peak" capacity in an effort to avoid busy signals

- Costs for circuit-based services are quite significant, often totaling several hundred dollars per month. This represents a large and on-going monthly expense that could be better allocated to causes which further develop and scale your business.

- Access to data on call volume, call handling and other aspects of phone traffic in your business is very rudimentary. This makes it hard to gauge employee productivity or effectiveness of marketing efforts.

- Such phone systems are complex to manage, requiring specialized technicians. Moreover, they are difficult to modify at will in events such as having to rename a user or moving a phone to another desk.

- If your business depends on phones, an on-site traditional phone system represents a single point of failure; a power-outage or natural disaster will cripple the ability of your clients to reach your business, at a time when they need you most.

Transitioning your phones to a cloud-based (hosted) phone system, based on Voice-Over IP (VoIP) technology eliminates all of these limitations, and adds many benefits:

- Flexibility to integrate on-site and remote workers
- Seamless routing of calls across multiple locations regardless of geography
- Advanced features like "Click-to-Call", "Voicemail to Email" and many others
- Materially lower maintenance costs
- Redundancy in the event of power outages or natural disasters

However, VoIP technology is quite complex, involving many different components and service providers. With the presence of multiple variables, a transition to a VoIP service should be carefully planned to avoid unintended service degradation, and user dissatisfaction.

Keys to a successful VoIP implementation

Any transition to VoIP should start with a comprehensive analysis of your current system and your business needs. This should include things like:

- Quantity and location of all phones
- Call flows and sequences for the calls that enter the business (Sales Calls, Support calls etc.)
- Phone operation for On Hours, After Hours and Holiday schedules
- Auto-Attendant prompts and Hold Music or Messaging

Specific attention needs to be paid to services that depend on land lines, for example credit card machines that are tied to phone lines. Solutions need to be identified for each service, either by upgrading equipment, providing an adaptation device, or switching vendors.

Unlike traditional phone systems which work on dedicated wires, VoIP phones are connected to a data network, in the same way that your computers connect. There are two options in setting up the VoIP network, each with its own benefits and tradeoffs:

- Share the existing data network in the office for both Phones & Computers
- This is the easiest way to get started, as no additional wiring is needed
- Most VoIP phones provide a 'switch' connection so that a PC and a phone can share the same jack/outlet
- Drawbacks of this approach are that the phones and computers can interact in ways that affect each other. For example, a misconnected computer jack can bring both phones and computers down, or a broken phone will disrupt the user's PC.
- Create a separate VoIP network
- This separates your phones and computers so they do not interfere with each other, eliminating one source of potential problems with your service.
- The drawback here being that setting up a separate network may increase the up-front cost of the transition.

VoIP service utilizes your Internet connection to deliver the phone calls. While this eliminates the congestion caused by fixed-line services, it also means that the quality and availability of your service is dependent on your Internet Service Provider. A transition to VoIP should include an evaluation of the current capacity, utilization, and most importantly, reliability, of your current Internet service. In addition, since voice and data will share the same connection, care needs to be taken to ensure that phone calls always have the highest priority, and that data traffic cannot consume all the available capacity of the connection.

In VoIP systems, much of the intelligence is located at the end-user's phone. These devices are much more so-phisticated than traditional phones with multiple software components and advanced user interfaces. As a result, it is important to select phones that have the right combination of functionality, ease-of-use and reliability. Cost alone should not be the basis for selection as many low-cost products have shortcomings in both reliability and ease-of-use.

The most critical component of any VoIP system is the VoIP phone switch itself. There are a wide variety of op-tions from proprietary on-location boxes to cloud-based open platforms. Managing and troubleshooting these systems requires a unique combination of skills in both telephone & data networks, and is not a task most IT personnel will find rudimentary. Due to the number of components in a typical VoIP deployment, it is important to identify vendors or service providers who can take a holistic view of your deployment rather than engaging in finger-pointing when problems arise.

One of the major benefits of a VoIP transition is the ability to integrate your phone system with other core compo-nents of your business infrastructure, like Customer-Relationship Management (CRM) or Billing Systems. An in-novative transition should identify ways to capitalize on such opportunities and outline a plan for integration. This should be planned as a second step, to avoid imparting too much change at once to your operating mechanisms.

In summary, the keys to any successful VoIP deployment are:

• Thorough up-front analysis of the current phone & data networks

• Strategy for the comprehensive design, tailoring, and implementation of the phone system including a plan for landline dependent services

• Selection of phone devices that match end-user requirements and skill levels

• Selection of a VoIP Provider or Vendor who understands the complexity of the solution and is capable of identi fying problems regardless of where they reside

The 4Voice Difference

4Voice delivers state-of-the art VoIP phone solutions to businesses of all sizes. Our platforms are scalable, flexible, and reliable and were founded on over 80 years of telecommunications experience—but that is not what differentiates us.

The 4Voice difference begins before you even become a customer. Our initial evaluation will examine everything from your phone bill to the wiring at each phone location, ensuring that all of the potential pit-falls in a VoIP transition have been covered.

With 4Voice, your design, installation and setup are executed by experts. We do not believe in a one-size fits all strategy; we sit down with our clients to generate a phone solution that matches their business needs, instead of the other way around. Each customer operates in a unique environment and we tailor our approach and subsequent solutions accordingly. This includes items such as designing an auto-attendant menu to direct calls, setting up active reporting so you can monitor employee productivity and key performance metrics, and coming up with backup plans for disaster recovery.

At 4Voice, we take responsibility for your phone service end-to-end. Our advanced monitoring systems continually surveil all of our customer sites for both connectivity and quality. Alerts are issued in the event of an anomaly so we can start working on problems even before customers voice a concern. Our engineers will identify the problem, determine the cause and even contact your Internet service providers if necessary.

Many VoIP providers can check the boxes on the items which separate VoIP from current technologies. However, that is credit to the technology, not the platform. 4Voice has the ability to take it one step further by tailoring and integrating the phone system to your individual or industry needs. Many of our customers have specific processes that run their businesses. Often, these processes can benefit from having integration with the phone system. For example, a business with multiple marketing campaigns can have incoming calls display an indicator for which campaign the call is for, helping agents provide the right information to the caller. And that is just scratching the surface of our capabilities; we work with our customers to not only find ways to reduce cost while improving quality of service, but more importantly, to help identify fashions in which the phone system can have the most profound effect as they look to improve efficiencies and scalability of their business.

Contact us today to find out how you can benefit from the 4Voice Difference.