



Seven benefits of moving to a cloud-based phone system



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Why are businesses moving their voice to the cloud?

Businesses are finding that their private branch exchanges (PBXs) are no longer meeting their needs. This is especially true for businesses who haven't upgraded their PBXs in a while, perhaps delaying the work because it requires a relatively large investment. They're left with a rigid phone system that lacks the capabilities to support fast-growing or agile organisations. In extreme cases, it would only take the failure of one ageing component that's no longer available to knock out a company's communications.

Do any of these issues sound familiar?

- System downtimes impacting offices or other sites for hours or even days.
- Too much time spent trying to maintain multiple PBXs, often supplied by different providers and scattered across many locations.
- Exponentially rising support and consultancy costs.
- Vendors taking days or weeks to make minor repairs or replace broken parts.
- Not having the expertise required to maintain the system in-house.
- Searching eBay for phones or obsolete PBXs to replace broken components or add employees to the system.
- Paying system integrators to integrate core business communications and apps.

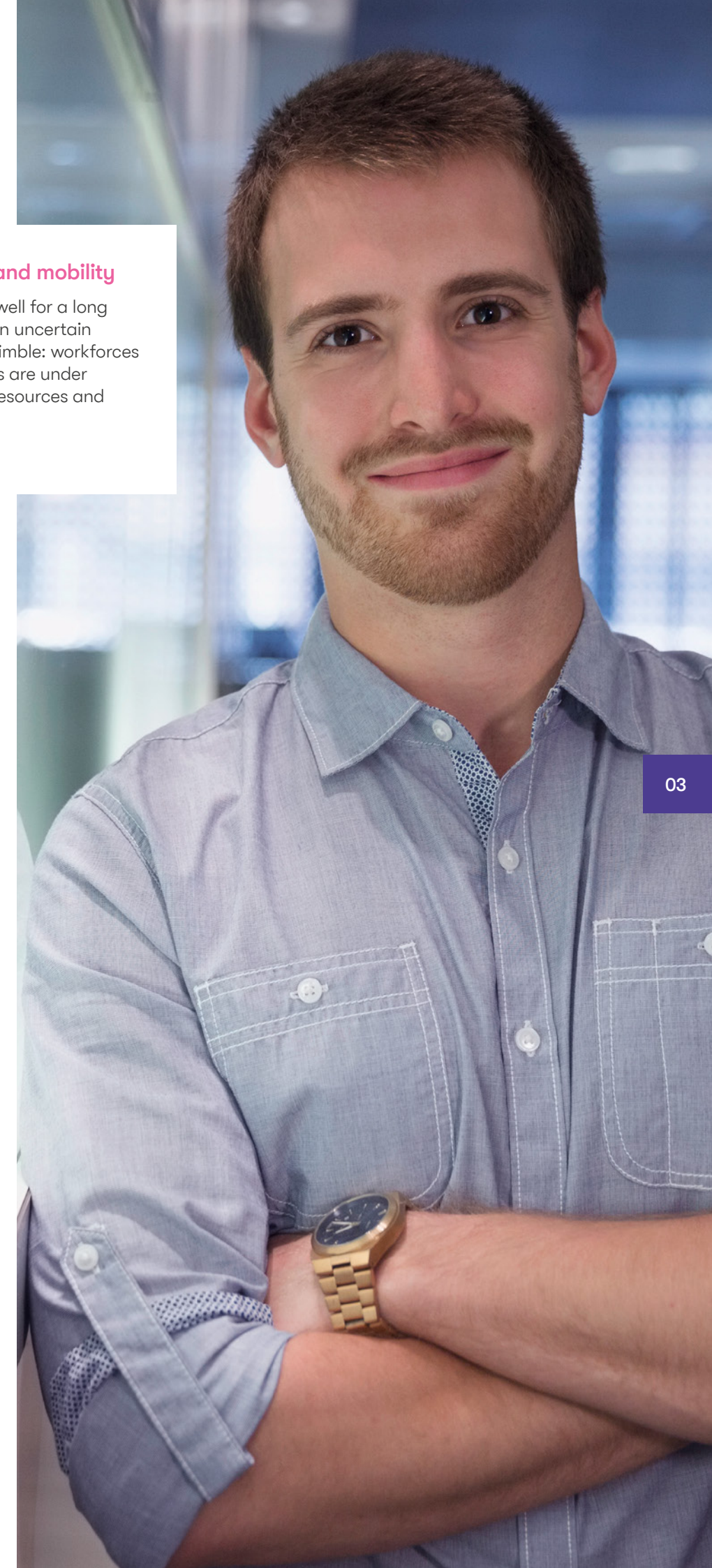
In this paper, we'll set out seven compelling reasons for replacing your company's onsite PBX system with a VoIP solution, also known as cloud VoIP. We'll explain why cloud VoIP is simpler and less expensive than legacy PBX systems, and how it can transform your company's communications. So prepare to learn about a phone system that your entire workforce can use, including remote and mobile workers, and ways to improve your critical business systems.

The need for agility, flexibility and mobility

Onsite PBXs have served companies well for a long time. But the world has changed. In an uncertain economy, organisations need to be nimble: workforces have gone mobile and IT departments are under pressure to find efficiencies, free up resources and support strategic initiatives.

Today, many businesses are looking for platforms that can handle new ways of working, while being flexible enough to accommodate rapid growth or business change. When selecting your next phone system, it pays to ask how it will:

- readily adapt to changes that impact your business — i.e. scaling up and down as needed
- support multiple locations, without draining valuable IT resources
- provide the flexibility you need today and meet unidentified needs in the future
- support bring-your-own-device (BYOD) and mobile workers, as parts of a distributed workforce
- relieve the headaches of managing simple changes, upgrades or fixes
- unify communications across your organisation
- minimise costs, both now and in the future.



Seven key benefits of moving to a modern phone system

Cloud VoIP is one of many cloud-based applications to come of age in recent times. Businesses of all sizes have adopted cloud phone systems because of their reliability. And there are various benefits. The integrated capabilities of a fully-featured cloud phone solution address the challenges modern businesses face.

“The proliferation of mobile devices and the growing BYOD phenomenon has pushed legacy on-premise communications systems beyond their capability to serve today’s distributed and mobile workforces.”

Robert Mahowald, IDC Program Vice President for SaaS and Cloud Services

We’ll go on to describe benefits for businesses, employees, networks and data infrastructure. And BT Cloud Work will be used in this paper to illustrate the benefits of a cloud-based system.

1. It unifies communications across your company

Typically, companies with onsite PBXs use a patchwork of business communications tools: individual internet fax accounts, third-party audio and video conferencing, web meetings, standalone fax machines. There’s usually no true connection or synergy between these tools. They might even come with the need to manage multiple bills from various providers.

We developed Cloud Work to improve this situation. It integrates business communications into a single solution, including voice, online faxing, messaging, online meetings, audio and video conferencing, voicemail and other Unified Communications (UC) features.

It also integrates with cloud-based and back-office business applications. This one-stop service can link your various modes of communication and save money, while also eliminating the need to manage unwieldy bills or track charges from multiple vendors.

With such a solution, your organisation can present a single identity to the world. This means every employee, whether they work in an office or on the road, can make and take calls from a single business number. This gives your company’s communications a consistent and professional appearance. Even remote workers’ outbound calls are routed through the cloud and appear as if they’re calling from the corporate location. For example, a salesperson doesn’t have to give their mobile phone number when working out of the office but provides the same corporate number to customers. When employees leave the office, calls automatically follow them to their smartphones via the Cloud Work mobile app.

2. It simplifies multiple location management

Maintaining and administering phone systems in multiple locations can present a management nightmare for IT, especially if they have to deal with PBX hardware and phones from different vendors. In contrast, if the entire phone system was hosted in the cloud, the IT team would be able to manage it from any location, using a simple web interface or mobile app.

This saves the cost and effort of sending an experienced IT person to remote locations to perform maintenance work or make simple changes (such as adding numbers and provisioning new employees). You won’t have to make expensive calls to a local service provider or wait for changes and repairs to be made.

Our cloud-based phone system allows you to quickly start up a new location. And for new or existing locations, it does away with the cost and complexity of managing MPLS or other business exchange lines running between sites. Instead, all voice traffic travels over the internet.

3. It flexes when your business flexes

Whether your organisation is trying to grow or simply compete in today’s markets, you can’t afford to be held back by your business systems.

As your business grows or its needs change, a cloud VoIP system will adapt. If you need to add staff during the holidays or tax season, all you need to do is plug a phone into an ethernet port and make a simple change on your dashboard.

This is helpful if you can’t predict where your business will be in two or three years. How many phone lines will you need? How many locations will your colleagues work from? A cloud-based system is inherently flexible and scalable. This isn’t the case with an onsite IP PBX – each line is limited to 30 simultaneous calls. Cloud VoIP provides instant access to inbound and outbound call capacities that are virtually limitless.

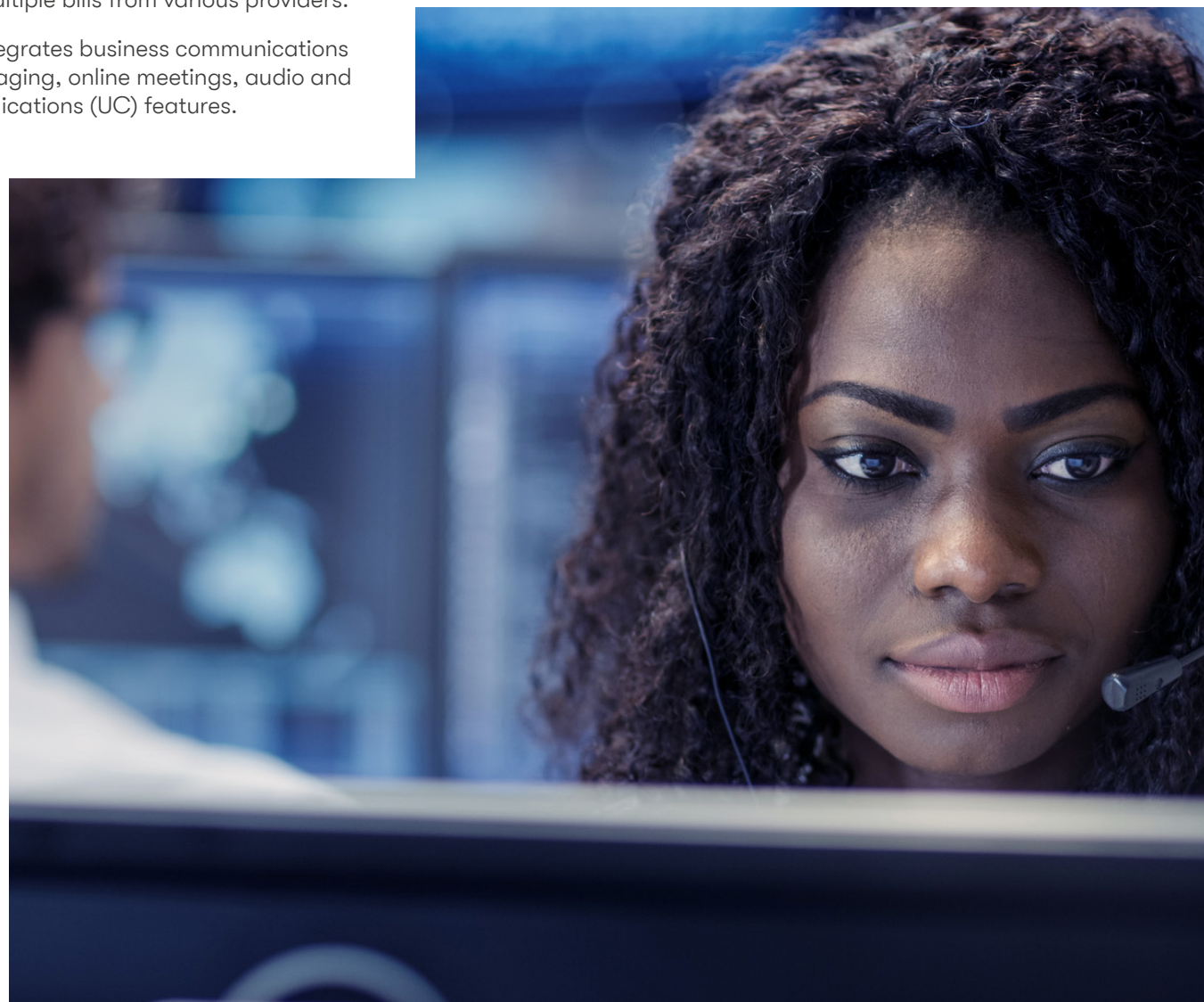
4. It reduces infrastructure management and headaches

Buying and installing a new site-based system can cost tens of thousands of pounds, or hundreds of thousands to equip multiple locations. Few companies can afford to invest in or support a PBX at every site.

A cloud VoIP eliminates the need for upfront investments in costly hardware, wiring for phones and data and items like additional cards for future employees. For instance, with Cloud Work, the infrastructure for your phone system is kept in secure, geographically-distributed data centres with built in redundancy. Telephony experts manage the system around the clock to give you high availability.

The cost savings are even greater if your business works in multiple locations. In these cases, cloud VoIP spares you the expense of buying more than one piece of PBX hardware, PTSN or other business exchange lines. You no longer need skilled IT staff; to send specialists to remote locations; or to call local service providers to manage your phone system or make changes and repairs.

Many companies consider investing in an IP PBX, because it promises IP connectivity. Managers enjoy having one onsite, because it gives them more control over their systems. However, before making a purchase decision, it’s worth adding up all of the necessary costs. These include outlays for network upgrades, which can be significant. Cloud Work can be used with very few upgrades to the network core, except for the addition of a QoS-enabled router if one isn’t already installed.



5. It connects mobile and remote workers

Remote and mobile workers often struggle to connect to site-based phone systems, unless the business is paying a series of licensing fees to use advanced systems. But with a cloud-based system, they can connect in the same way as employees in head office. Our mobile app, which works on any iOS or Android device, essentially transforms a mobile phone into a desk phone and a powerful communications device.

Calls automatically follow workers wherever they go and customers always see your business number rather than the employee's personal home or mobile number. For example, rather than mortgage brokers at a bank providing their personal mobile numbers, they can give customers the corporate number. This offers customers greater confidence. If the broker leaves the company, the number is easily transferred to other employees – so the company (rather than the person) retains the customer's loyalty. All of the employee's valuable contact information resides in the cloud, where it can be easily retrieved by your IT department, rather than remaining on an employee-owned device.

Cloud VoIP also gives mobile and remote workers access to voicemail, fax, email and other company communications. With conference calling and HD video meetings, employees can work from any location, easily and cost-effectively. Finally, a cloud-based system eliminates the unenviable job of tallying up and paying hundreds or thousands of personal phone bills.

6. It provides instant access to the latest features

Some legacy PBX systems have a limited set of features, and more advanced products often charge extra for basic features like voicemail or UC tools. In contrast, Cloud Work continually integrates the latest features into its system. One example is the recent addition of HD video meetings. It was available immediately, without added cost for anyone with a Connect licence, or the need to perform upgrades.

7. It gives greater control

While having your phone hardware and software onsite might seem to offer control, having it in the cloud actually makes it easier to manage. For example, with cloud VoIP, you no longer need to be in the same physical location as the phone system to make changes. Instead, you can manage on the move or at home. It's easy to make urgent changes on your laptop or smartphone, using a simple web interface.

This means you no longer have to deal with a third party to add, moves or change your system. Any administrator can add a new number in seconds using the web interface.

Conclusion

The time is right to upgrade to a cloud-based system

More and more businesses are switching from ageing hardware and antiquated PBX-based systems to cloud VoIP. Solutions like Cloud Work move phone systems into the modern world. It unifies voice, fax, messaging and video and audio conferencing as parts of a single network. Unlike analogue systems, it also integrates seamlessly with cloud and back-office business applications. The result is a business phone system that provides:

- flexibility to adapt quickly to business change
- manageability that frees IT resources and time while reducing headaches
- greater control and service mobility —phones and numbers can be moved, added or changed almost instantly
- unified business communications that streamline the way you communicate inside and outside your company, while simplifying everything from management to billing
- integration and collaboration with other applications, such as CRM systems
- lower infrastructure costs and fewer management headaches
- support for a mobile and distributed workforce.

Cloud VoIP does all this without the operational overheads, capital expenditure, IT resource requirements or administrative headaches associated with maintaining your hardware and software onsite.

We manage the entire infrastructure in secure, redundant data centres. This includes handling network maintenance, software updates and system upgrades. And we're continually developing the system behind the scenes to improve reliability and add new capabilities.

Terms and definitions

BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) is a policy adopted by businesses that allows employees to use devices they own, instead of insisting they use an officially provided device.

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is a set of technologies and tools used to manage, improve or facilitate sales, support and related interactions with customers, prospects and business partners.

PBX (Private Branch eXchange) is a private telephone system that switches calls between business users on local lines, while allowing all users to share a certain number of external phone lines.

IP PBX (Internet Protocol Private Branch eXchange) is a private business telephone system that provides similar functions to a PBX, but over data networks such as a LAN or WAN rather than traditional circuit-switched networks. IP PBX typically can switch calls between VoIP on local lines or between VoIP and traditional telephone users.

MPLS (Multi-Protocol Label Switching) is a packet data transport service that uses a high-speed switching architecture rather than the typical routers seen in most IP networks. It transmits calls across a telco service provider's network in a cloud-like connection between the business customer's locations.

PRI (Primary Rate Interface) circuits are phone lines based on the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) standard, used for carrying multiple voice calls and/or data transmissions between two physical locations.

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) uses the language of the internet to place and transmit telephone calls over an IP network rather than the traditional public switched telephone network (PSTN).



For more information, please contact your account manager or, if you're a new customer, please call **0800 345 7984**.

Offices Worldwide

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