5 Steps

To a Successful Switch to VoIP

Switching your phone system to a VoIP provider may seem like a daunting task, given the vast array of providers out there, but it's actually a pretty painless process – once you know what your needs are. To determine which system will work best for you, use our simple five-step guide to better assess your needs.

6.9 billion people
on the planet

2.3 billion people
on the internet

More than 2.3 billion people have access to the internet, and that number is growing at a rate of 474 people per minute. VoIP services take into account the ever-increasing shift to digital mediums.

(Source: http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/02/16/almost-8-new-internet-users-added-worldwide-every-second-infographic/)

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STEP 1. FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU NEED

Understanding the scope of your phone needs before you invest in a system is critical to the success of your switch. Before you buy, you'll want to consider two topics that have a big impact on the type of VoIP phone system that's best for you: location and employees. To make sure you've got your bases covered, arm yourself with answers to these questions:

LOCATION

1. How many locations does your business currently have?

2. Do you plan to add office locations in the next few years?

3. Do you have remote employees who need to be connected to the phone system?

4. Do you have areas other than workstations that need phones, like kitchens, lobbies, break areas, labs and waiting rooms?

5. Do you have conference rooms that need phones?

EMPLOYEES

6. How many employees do you have?

7. How many employees do you expect to add in the next year? Two years? Five years?

8. Does each employee need a desk phone?

9. Do you have a receptionist? How many?

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STEP 2. ASSEMBLE THE TEAM

Next, you'll want to identify the people at your company who will be involved in the process of selecting and implementing your new VoIP phone system. The first two on the list should be the person who has final approval and the person who best understands the technical infrastructure of your locations.

It's also wise to consult with leaders from a variety of departments. Involving key decision-makers from departments across the company helps ensure that everyone gets the features they need to be more productive. Some of the departments that typically have unique phone needs include:

- Sales
- Customer Support
- IT
- Executive Team

- Marketing
- Finance
- HR
- Operations

Like the Justice League, every leader in each department has a unique purpose and certain requirements in their communications systems.

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STEP 3. CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

Today's VoIP phone systems come with an array of features and capabilities; some of which may be critical to your business, and others not so much. Before you make a list of your "must-haves" versus your "don't needs," it's smart to do a little investigating into some of the exciting new features modern VoIP systems offer that you may not have considered before. Some of the advanced and productivity-boosting features you may want to add to your must-list include:

1. Business Application Integration with the Phone System

2. Voice Mail to Email Transcription

3. Mobile Device and BYOD Support

4. Business Intelligence Reporting

5. On-Demand Conferencing

6. Call Recording

7. Call Center Functionality, Routing and Queues

ARISTOTLE'S THREE ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

ETHOS

PATHOS

LOGOS
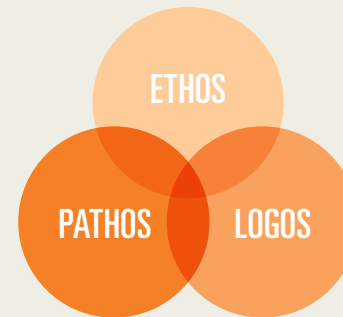
The way we communicate has changed considerably in the last few thousand years, but the rudiments are still the same.

The tools and data provided by VoIP systems allow you to hone your message, and achieve your business goals, whether it's sealing the deal on a sale or keeping customers satisfied with support.

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STEP 4. MAKE IT WORK

Once you know what you want your new VoIP phone system to do, you'll need to consider how it will work. This may require the assistance of your IT staff or a trusted consultant, who can answer the following questions:

1. What type of cabling is available in each location for both voice and data?

2. What are your data needs?

3. What types of broadband connections are available?

4. Do you have contracts with broadband and/or voice providers? If so, when do they expire?
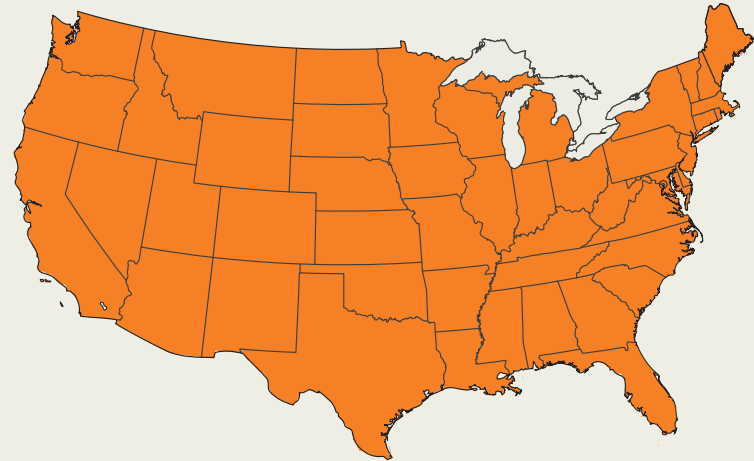
VoIP uses existing infrastructure, eliminating the need for a separate phone system. Broadband internet is available to 94 percent of Americans, but we are the 12th in the world in terms of Internet speed. A private Internet connection ameliorates hiccups that can occur on public lines.

(Source: http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2012/0824/Got-broadband-Access-now-extends-to-94-percent-of-Americans)

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STEP 5. ASK A DOZEN QUESTIONS

There are lots of VoIP service providers out there, so it can be tough to determine which one deserves your business. To help you separate the good from the bad and the ugly, feel free to use our…

TOP 12 QUESTIONS TO ASK A VOIP SERVICE PROVIDER — BEFORE YOU BUY

1. Do you have VoIP customers like me, similar in size, industry and complexity? And are there case studies, customer testimonials or videos of these customers I can review?

2. What are the initial, monthly, and ongoing maintenance and support costs?

3. Will I have to pay for upgrades to the system?

4. How long is the contract?

5. What are the details of your phone system implementation process?

6. How will be provided to help with implementation?

7. Who will support my users if they have questions or problems?

8. Do you have a service level agreement in place?

9. How do you guarantee call quality and availability?

10. Do you make your performance and reliability statistics public?

11. What can you tell me about your financials?

12. How do I know you will be around to support me for the next five to seven years?

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BONUS STEP. CALL AN EXPERT

We hope "Five Steps" has helped you feel confident in your decision to make the switch to VoIP. To learn more about ShoreTel Sky and download other related e-books, white papers, and view product demos please visit http://www.shoretelsky.com/resources.

41 percent of you are alright with making this call from the toilet on your cell phone.

(Source: http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/1964-mobile-phones-bathrooms.html)

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