

# YOUR GUIDE TO VOIP

Demystify the acronyms, unpack the benefits  
and find the right option for you





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Want to understand  
exactly how things work?

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Hello!

# What is VoIP all about?

Voice tech is changing. The world is moving away from the traditional blend of mobiles, landlines and conference services.

Wherever we're doing that thing we call 'work' – the office, downstairs at Starbucks, or sweeping stuff aside to use the kitchen table – it's more than likely we have an internet connection. And so talking over the internet makes a lot of sense. Not least because it can cut costs and the faff of juggling different devices.

This brand of magic is called Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP for short. It's been around for a while, but huge advances are now turning it from a relatively niche tool to something many of us use as the main way to make calls every single day.

And once you've got going, it really is simpler. You'll have the reassurance that your call quality will never be compromised. And – with reduced call costs – it's cheaper too.



# Unjumble the jargon

If you're thinking about transforming your voice tech, expect to drown in a deluge of acronyms. Starting with a dictionary isn't the most dramatic intro (but we thought it might be more helpful than big explosions and a soaring soundtrack).

## Old tech terms

### **Centrex**

This is an old style private switchboard, where you keep the equipment at your head office.

### **PBX**

A switch that acts as your company's own Centrex service. You get more functionality but you have to buy an extra bit of kit, which can be expensive.

### **IVR**

Interactive voice response - this lets you do the whole 'press 1 for accounts, press 2 for customer services' thing.

### **Hunt group**

A way of sending a call to a group of people (for example, if you 'pressed 1 for accounts', your IVR could send the call to everyone in the accounts team, or it could try them in a certain order).

## New tech terms

### **VoIP**

Rather than travelling down telephone wires, your voice is turned into packets of data and sent down a secure private network.

### **Cloud Voice**

The quickest, simplest, no-hassle route to VoIP. As it's hosted in the cloud there's no up-front costs or CapEx. All the difficult, technical stuff is handled in an industrial-strength (and sized) data centre.

### **SIP Trunking**

The alternative to Cloud Voice. It's a route that delivers voice traffic over your internet connection. You'll need extra kit in your office to make it work. But it gives you more control.



# The Head of Voice explains how it works

Alex Larcombe is our Head of Voice, so we chatted to him (over VoIP, naturally) about who'll benefit most from this new voice technology.

## **Why should people look at a Cloud VoIP?**

"Flexibility and scalability are the two biggies – because it's hosted in the cloud it means the you don't need the hassle of on-going maintenance and expertise in house. It's all maintained and managed in the cloud."

## **How does that help?**

"It means it's perfect for small businesses who don't want the hassle of owning software on site. Being cloud hosted, you have the flexibility to manage your telephone setup from a simple cloud-based portal.

You can add and remove users easily and swiftly, without the need for hardware changes."

## **How about the costs?**

"Download the app onto your mobile, and you'll get full Cloud Voice on your phone. All internal calls are free – it's a huge cost-saving exercise"

## **Is there anyone who wouldn't suit a cloud-based system?**

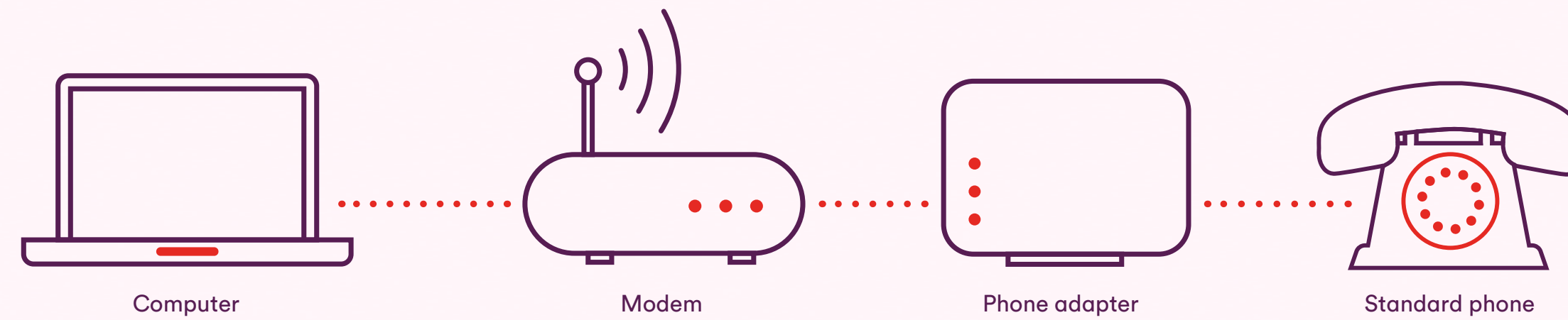
"It doesn't work if customers are heavily invested in a PBX and need return on investment on what they've already spent."



# How does VoIP work?

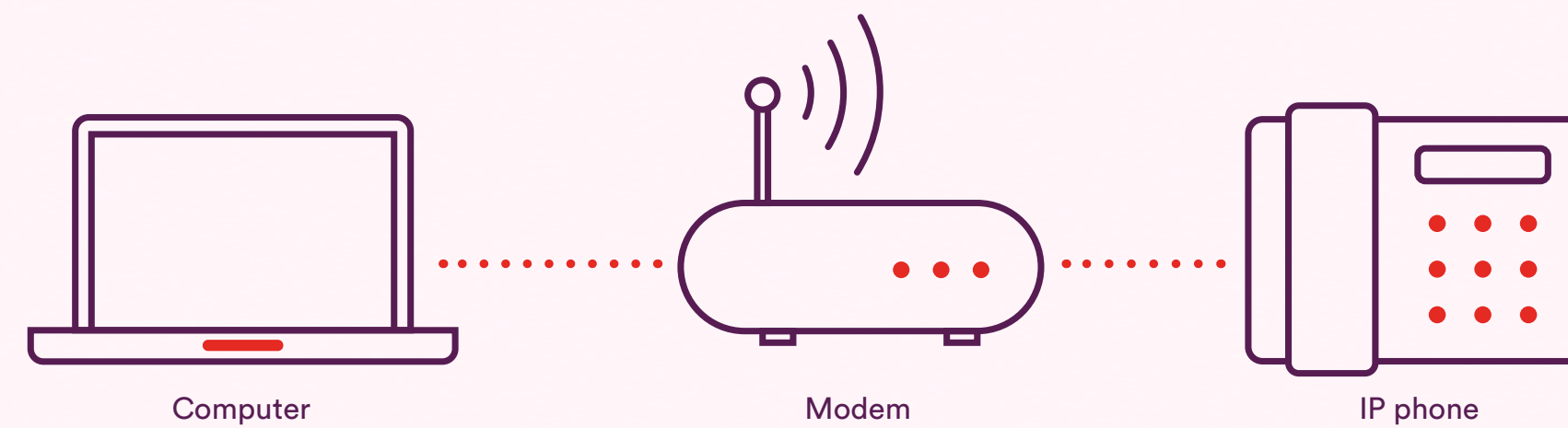
## Traditional tech

Normal phone lines use the traditional circuit-based protocols of the public switched telephone network.



## Today's tech

Voice over IP systems convert analogue voice signals into digital data packets and transmit two way conversations in real time using Internet Protocol.





# How do you do it?

There are two ways to get VoIP into your business. And the good news is you've probably already got most of the kit. For instance, a smartphone might be your key component – so just download the relevant app.

For laptops and tablets you might want to plug in a headset as well. As the software works on most modern devices, you can run VoIP on all of them. And if you're office based, desk phones are also available.

Whatever kit you use, there two basic 'flavours' of solution:



## 1. Go cloud-based

If you pay a monthly fee, you can 'rent' the service and all the technical stuff will happen in someone else's big, well-maintained server farm – leaving the techie bits to people who specialise in that type of thing. There's often no upfront cost and you don't need to worry about keeping the service running.

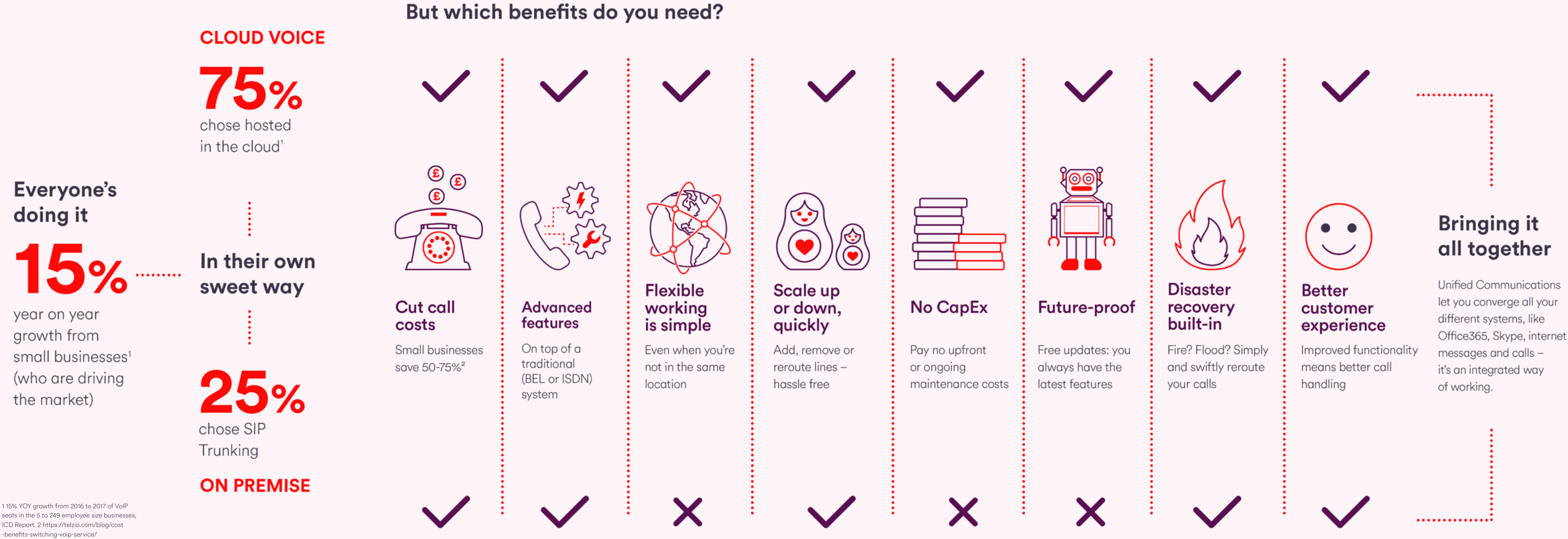


## 2. Keep it in the office

Some people prefer more control and decide to buy and keep the servers at their own offices. Which means the upfront costs increase and you need to do the tech support and maintenance yourself. You'll also need some kit: an IP PBX or SBC (the switches that allow the SIP Trunking to send your voice over the internet).

# In the cloud or in your office?

Find the kind of VoIP that’s right for you. Check out the best bits of both in this infographic. Whichever you choose, the benefits far outweigh what you can get with traditional voice.



<sup>1</sup> 115% YOY growth from 2016 to 2017 of VoIP seats in the 5 to 249 employee size businesses, ICD Report. 2 <https://telzio.com/blog/cost-benefits-switching-voip-service/>



# What's in it for me?

## 1. You'll save money

Imagine catching up with your team from abroad, for the same cost as calling down to reception.

Well, it's all very possible. The internet cares little about geography – so it makes sense to use it for phone calls. You'll save on external call charges. And if everyone's making calls using your new VoIP service, the cost of internal phone calls within your business will be virtually eliminated.

Free up your employees to communicate with each other wherever they are in the world – all they need is the app and a WiFi connection. Put everyone on it – and you'll save even more.

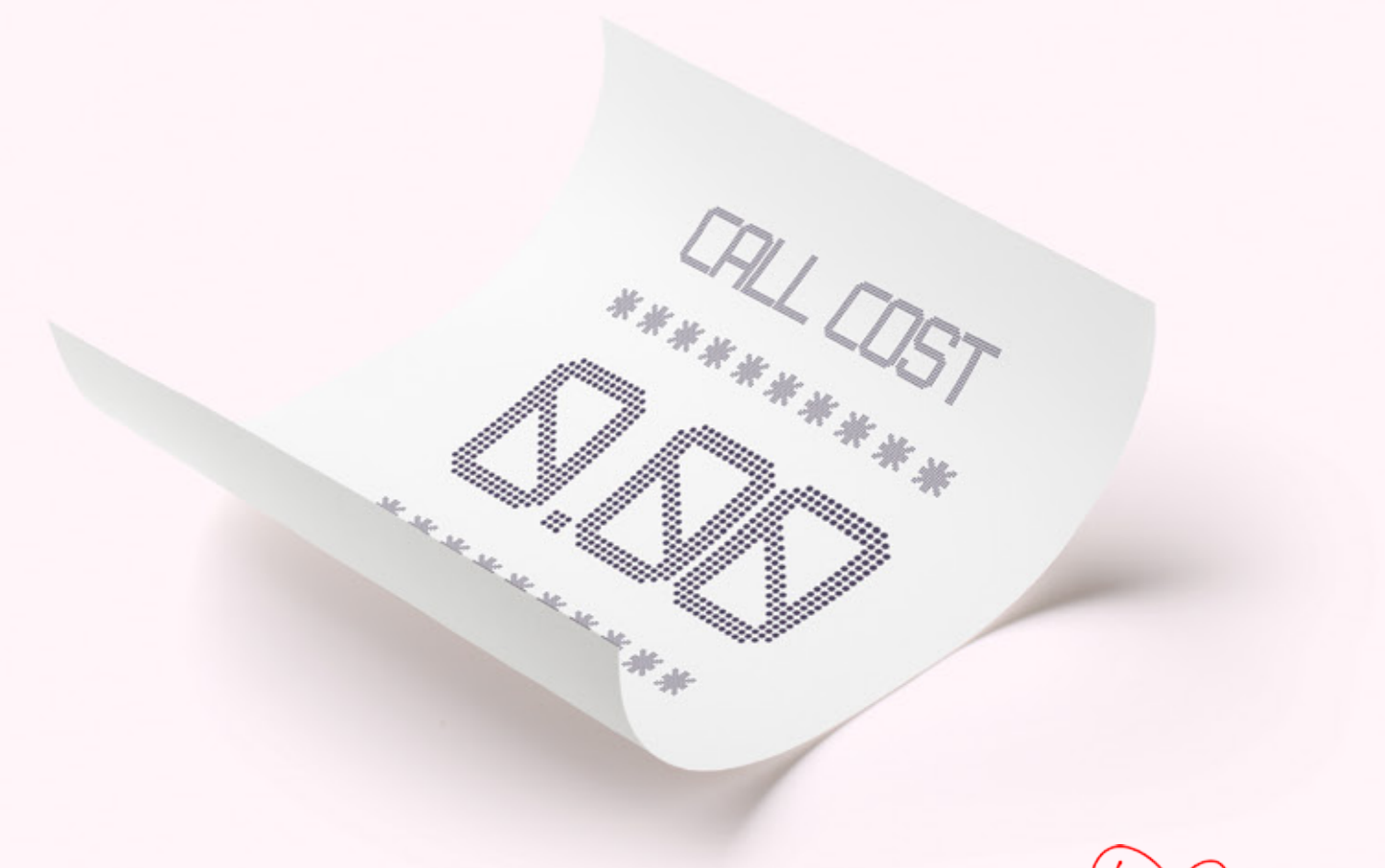
Choose Cloud Voice and you'll get the latest IP Voice software, updated automatically with no hardware to maintain. And our bundles offer big savings – you get all the features you need for one price (and you're not paying for ones you don't).

But if you'd rather have the kit on site and retain full control, there are still big savings to be had.

## 2. You'll be more productive

With our Broadsoft VoIP platform, you can have a market-leading, business-grade telephone system, packed with features. Cloud Voice integrates with your email, Microsoft Office, IM and other apps too. It'll replace your old landline and work with your smartphone – in fact, it's compatible with most PCs, tablets or other devices.

Your whole business will be able to hold media-rich meetings with anyone from any location. Just turn on video and start sharing documents.





### 3. You'll be more agile

Expand your team in busy times with none of the 60-day wait or cost or faffing that goes with traditional landlines. Add, remove or re-route lines swiftly.

And you'll be able to add the exact number of extensions you need, rather than committing to extras you might never use.

### 4. Mobile working? Simple

Because your telephone line goes virtual, you carry it with you – wherever and whenever you are. On almost every device.

You'll never miss a message and can make free internal calls from anywhere – which means your office expands to the size of the globe. All you need is access to WiFi.

Given the population of mobile workers is expected to grow to 3.71 billion by 2018, that's more than just a freedom: it could be part of your competitive advantage.

And there are more business continuity options than old landlines can offer, so a catastrophe at the office doesn't have to be disastrous for your business.





# Making the switch

We talked to Anthony Michael, founding partner of Michael Nash Associates. The award-winning design agency has an international client base and they've created everything from Massive Attack album covers, to the McQ identity for Alexander McQueen. We catch up with him to discuss why he's thinking about switching to VoIP.

He says, "Being able to have a call put through by my office, anywhere in the world, sounds attractive."

## **So, how important is keeping in touch with international clients?**

Anthony says, "It's always important, but what has changed is that effective companies are no longer expected to have a smart address, with a suite of offices filled with desks and phones and people doing lots of things no-one understands. A startup in a shared space is just as valued."

## **And why are they looking at VoIP now?**

"Our contract is up – there's an opportunity to spend less on a system with more functionality that can adapt with the needs of the business."

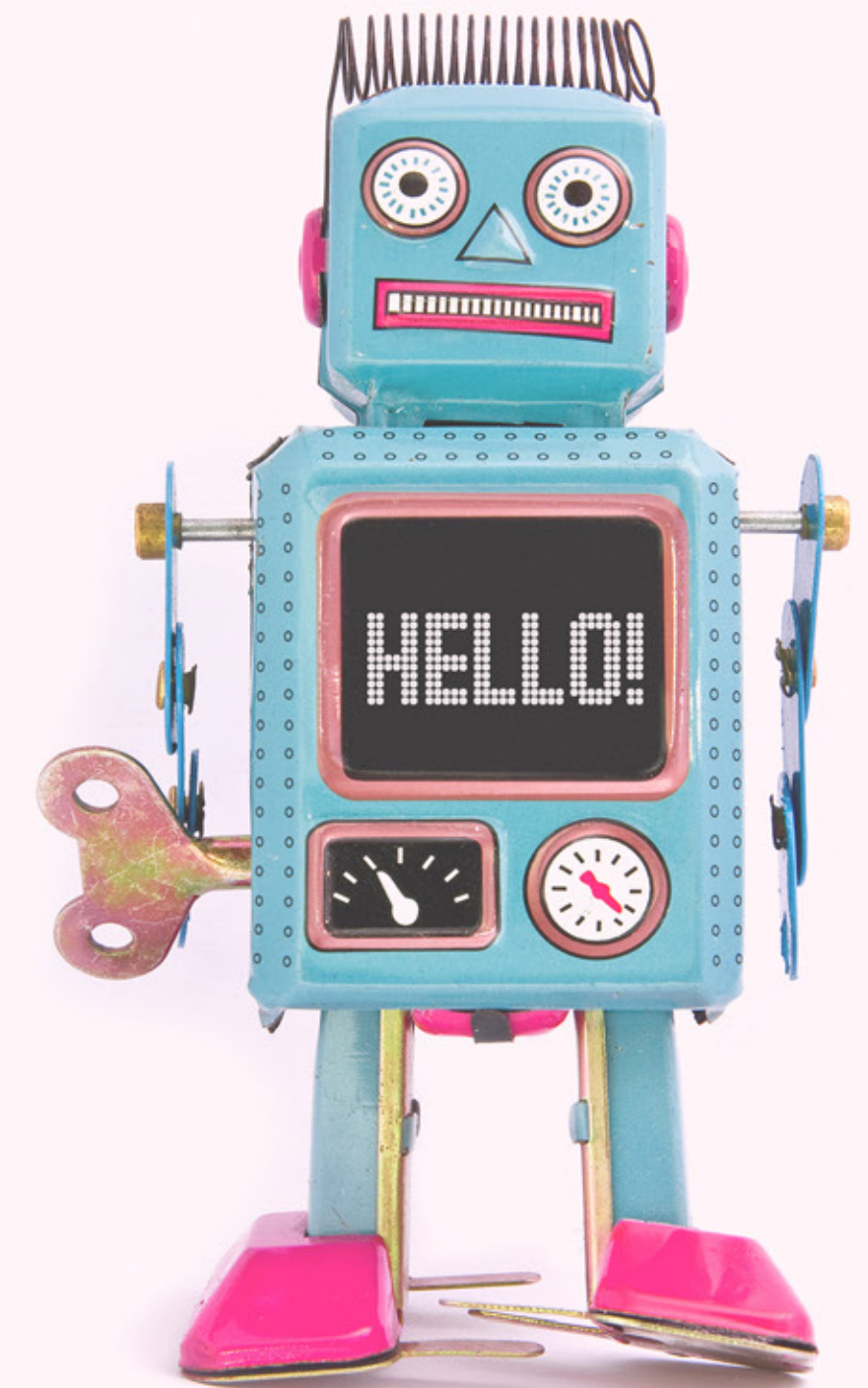
"We are very lazy with the hardwired bits of our office. And having grown up with landlines it's hard to let them go. However, as we have discovered with our computers, which now are all wireless, the hardware and the software constantly evolves – I guess the same with phones. We just need to realise that mobile phones and computers will do everything the landline system does and more – if we replace hardware with more flexible hardware and new software."

Explaining how they currently present work to clients, Anthony says, "Spider phone in the middle of the room linked to a projector – never do they both work, in any office I've ever worked in. Out of frustration someone just phones the other party and we all cluster around a laptop or iPhone."

So a cloud-based solution with the added benefits of sharing huge documents over the same connection and editing them in real-time seems like a no-brainer.

## **A final wise word from Anthony**

"If you make things simple, people do them."



# The ten questions we hear most

Ready to make the leap?  
Here's what you need to get sorted.

## 1. How do I prepare?

Within the next 10 years it won't be a choice. So if you're thinking about transforming your tech, the time is now.

On the surface, things won't be that different. Your handsets will look the same and the way you use them won't change either (you'll just plug them into a router rather than a separate hole in the wall).

If your business has a Local Area Network set up (for example, one internet connection across your office), then it's even easier. You'll just plug it into the socket on your desk.

## 2. Do I have enough bandwidth?

This is fundamental to getting a good VoIP experience, as you'll be adding voice traffic to your current data traffic.

As a rough rule of thumb, you may need an extra 40% on top of what you're currently using. (But obviously this depends on your number of users and your internet usage.) So you might need to upgrade your bandwidth for the best performance.

## 3. Can I use my old handsets?

You've got a shiny new system: it makes sense to have kit that's designed for it. So we recommend your phones are configured to use with VoIP. But that doesn't necessarily mean throwing out a load of expensive kit; it might just mean a quick check.

And if you choose our cloud-hosted solution, the mobile in your pocket will probably work perfectly. All you need to do is download the app.

## 4. What's the call quality like?

When VoIP first came out, restricted bandwidth and no way to guarantee voice quality meant lost words (called 'jitter') were common. And once you've experienced that, it's enough to put you off for life.

Fibre broadband has transformed the experience, and cables now cover even more of the country (we're currently in the process of the biggest investment in UK digital infrastructure for more than a decade). All of which means more small businesses can enjoy the benefits of VoIP, without any jitter.





## 5. How reliable is it?

It's your network provider who'll decide whether voice or data gets priority on your network. In most cases, voice should take priority. If data is slow, it's annoying. If you're missing every other word in a call – it's a disaster.

But if your connection isn't quick enough, prioritising voice can just mean everything else slows right down.

We're lucky, our network is ultra-powerful. So whether you choose our ultrafast business broadband or a leased line – you'll get the best VoIP experience.

Whoever your provider is, checking your bandwidth and set up now is essential.

## 6. Is VoIP open to phone hacking?

You use the internet now to send emails securely – so making voice calls over that same internet connection is no different.

And our secure network management gives you extra piece of mind. But it can be secured up with a firewall.

## 7. Can I keep my phone number?

Yes. Porting is easy. And your main number can be set up so that it rings your landline, mobile and colleagues all at once, if that's useful. And – as you're not restricted by geographic location – it's possible to have an 020 number anywhere in the country, even on your mobile.

## 8. What is the difference between Skype and Cloud Voice?

Skype is a type of VoIP and it's great for basic communication with colleagues, or clients and suppliers who also have the software. However Skype doesn't give you with all the clever features of VoIP (or even simple things, like call forwarding). And calling people who aren't using the service can be expensive.

## 9. If Skype calls are free, why do I need a call package?

As VoIP calls are made over the internet, your internal calls are free – so are calls made to people who are also using the same VoIP service. There are still charges if you're calling people who aren't using it. However, call costs are typically cheaper because they're being made over the same connection that delivers your internet.

## 10. How does VoIP save me money?

Businesses can save as much as 50% on their call costs<sup>1</sup>.

Plus, old-school phones need a dedicated voice line (like BEL or ISDN), which means you have to pay line rental charges. When you move to VoIP you use the same line that delivers your internet, so line rental's non-existent. Choose our cloud-based solution and you won't have any up-front CapEx costs. You can also have everything offsite, so there's no maintenance cost either.

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Thank you



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