

## The Business (and Technology) Case for Networking Phone Systems Within Multiple Offices

Why link together business phone systems across multiple offices? It's simple: When an organization deploys one phone network to multiple office locations, they are gaining solid economies of scale from centralized auto-attendant and voicemail platforms. Technology and maintenance costs are greatly reduced. Staffing requirements, such as the need to have a receptionist at each individual office location, are also reduced. And with the latest advancements in IP networks and SIP trunking, the cost to implement a networked phone system has never been lower.

### How much can a centralized network save you?

Consider a business with three offices:

- Each has their own receptionist at a salary of \$30,000/yr.
- Each has an independent voicemail platform at a cost of \$12,000 each.

By utilizing one network that covers all three offices — with one voicemail system and one receptionist that can route calls to any office — this company could save over \$80,000.

Now consider the long distance benefits. IP-based business phone systems run on data networks. This means toll charges on long distance calls are eliminated when those calls are not transmitted over the public telephone network. Call routing over a VoIP network will provide significant cost savings for the daily operations of your business; depending on the number and location of your corporate offices.

With a networked phone system, calls can be transferred and forwarded between offices seamlessly. Calls to one inbound number can be routed to various offices across the network. One receptionist can see the status of every employee, even if that person is 3 states away. Voicemails can come in on any line and be accessed from any extension, in any state — or accessed remotely through Unified Communications.

### Customer Service Benefits

When a prospect calls into a non-networked system, and they need to be transferred to a department in another office, that person must be given a new number. The prospective customer must then hang up and dial the other number — an eternity in which that person might decide to give up on the call altogether. With a networked system, a caller can be transferred to multiple extensions, and as many offices as necessary, to provide the assistance that person is seeking. And as far as the caller knows, all employees could be right in the same building.

Customer service can then be taken to the next level with an IP network, where voice and data are fully integrated. Through this technology, voice communications can be tracked and managed as a lucrative sales and customer information channel to support your core business goals. IP phone systems can be provisioned with an easy-to-use visual interface that provides useful calling information such as caller ID, elapsed time, and call volume. An employee can use mouse-clicks and drag-and-drop



102 Timbertrace Ct.  
Columbia, SC 29212  
1-866-IDEACOM (433-2266)  
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functionality to access features such as voice mail, messaging, call transfer, and call recording. A company can then track the customer experience, reveal and resolve call management problems, and evaluate and optimize the enterprise-wide communications infrastructure.

### **Network Advantages**

Installing and configuring new phones will not require expensive new cabling because an IP business phone system is network-based; all that is required to add an endpoint is to plug an audio-capable computer or IP telephone into the network and configure it as an endpoint. Maintenance of the network is also greatly simplified. IT staff can usually perform programming and troubleshooting from any node in the network. Moves/add/changes can happen without having to send a support resource all the way out to the office in question.

When linking voice and data, bandwidth availability and allocation will be a concern at the LAN and WAN boundary. We recommend that you perform a network analysis and assessment up front before launching any new technology deployment. We also recommend that you implement Quality of Service at you edge routers so that voice always has priority over data traffic.

### **What to look for in a vendor**

When upgrading your phone system, be sure you select a vendor that has a product that is network capable. The system needs to have enough ports for both auto attendant and voicemail, and needs to be able to accommodate the projected call traffic. The vendor should be able to provide tools to aid with your network assessment, and should be able to closely match the right system to your needs. A converged IP network can help you make the most of your bandwidth utilization.

Your network should also have the capability to evolve with your business. It should support open standards to simplify business process integration and offer advanced applications. If your network can expand smoothly as you add new offices, you will have the ability to grow your organization seamlessly and cost effectively.

With so much capability available, there really is no reason to delay networking your business phone systems together into one integrated, streamlined, and cohesive unit.



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