

# 10 easy steps to VOIP

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The cloud PBX services offer the convenience of VOIP, which is a cost-effective, quality, application-rich phone system. The following 10 easy steps will guide you.

## Stage 1 - setting the scene

### 1. *Do you want to keep your old PBX?*

The first step in adopting VOIP is deciding what you want out of it. Do you want to keep 'sweating' your existing analogue PBX, coupling it with VOIP to save on call costs, or do you want it as your sole voice solution, for extra savings and functions such as unified communications?

If the former, the provider will simply put in a gateway device on your premises, which will receive your analogue phone lines on one end and turn them into VOIP channels going out on your Internet line, for an instant 30% saving on call costs. A small gateway turning a few high-intensity phone lines into IP channels can be cost-effective (the gateway will attract an upfront cost).

If you need to do an upgrade or replace your PBX, or you're adding branches, a move to VOIP makes perfect sense. Better yet, go for full cloud VOIP (where the PBX is hosted by your VOIP provider, meaning you can say goodbye to PBX cost and operations headaches, but still pay for handsets and a gateway if the old PBX is kept as backup). Either way, the VOIP provider can then move onto the next question.

## Stage 2 - scoping

### 2. *Who does your IT?*

Since VOIP falls under the IT umbrella, your VOIP provider should from here on in be talking to your IT manager or support company, to ensure trouble-free installation, running and support of your system as well as beneficial costing. Their conversation will probably take a simple Q&A format, as follows:

### 3. *How many extensions (phone points) do you have or want?*

With the average company requiring perhaps 30 extensions, this will have a handset cost implication of around R20 000. (Note that, unlike analogue handsets, VOIP handsets are future-proof, and offer integration with other forms of communication, collaboration and business processes. Based on the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) standard, they can also serve as endpoints to other VOIP solutions.)

#### 4. ***How many branches?***

A single-premise company may want to keep its 'old' analogue PBX if it is still under contract, or required as a fall-back option, if a secondary Internet line is not available. But if there's more than one branch, it makes sense to go with VOIP for the whole installation, because inter-branch calls cost nothing over IP.

#### 5. ***How many simultaneous calls will you need to make per branch?***

One branch might be your support centre, in which case you must provide for as many simultaneous calls as there are people. But any 'normal' branch won't need more than 40% of its lines at once. This will have an implication for the size ('throughput') of the Internet line to each branch, which in turn will influence the total connectivity costs.

#### 6. ***How many cordless handsets do you need at each branch?***

How many roaming staff do you have that may need communications on the go? Think high-value salesperson on the shop floor, busy matron or stocktaking worker.

#### 7. ***What type of Internet access do you have at each branch?*** (ADSL, 3G, Neotel or other wireless)

Besides the possible cost implication of access, experienced providers will use knowledge of the line to decide on the 'architecture' of the VOIP solution. This could mean introducing mechanisms to improve quality and so forth.

### **Stage 3 - proof of concept**

1. Once the quote is accepted, some installations may warrant a proof of concept trial (installation).

### **Stage 4 - training and support**

#### 2. ***Training***

Training on the phone system's features allows smooth adoption. VOIP systems should come with a manual.

#### 3. ***Support***

Should issues still arise, support should be in place to resolve any issues. However, both training and support is minimized by the plug-and-play simplicity of cloud VOIP systems.

### **Child's play**

The truth about VOIP systems is that they're not different, in the main, from telephony as you know it. You will continue to take and make calls in exactly the same way, and adoption need not scare you. In addition, you will benefit from enormously beneficial extra features that improve workflow and communication.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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