GUIDES FOR VOIP

THE VOIP BUYER'S CHECKLIST: 8 CONSIDERATIONS FOR FIRST TIME BUYERS

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology allows businesses to make calls over IP networks instead of traditional public switched telephone networks. It's no surprise that many small and enterprise-sized businesses are making the switch to VoIP. With its extensive range of features, lower cost of ownership, and higher quality calls, VoIP blows traditional telephony services out of the water. Deploying a VoIP system is a major business investment, the options are dizzying, and the market is ever-changing. It's important to carefully assess the capabilities of each VoIP vendor that you consider to avoid potential problems – which could end up costing you more in the long run. The eight best practices detailed in this whitepaper will help guide you in your search for the VoIP vendor that is right for your business.
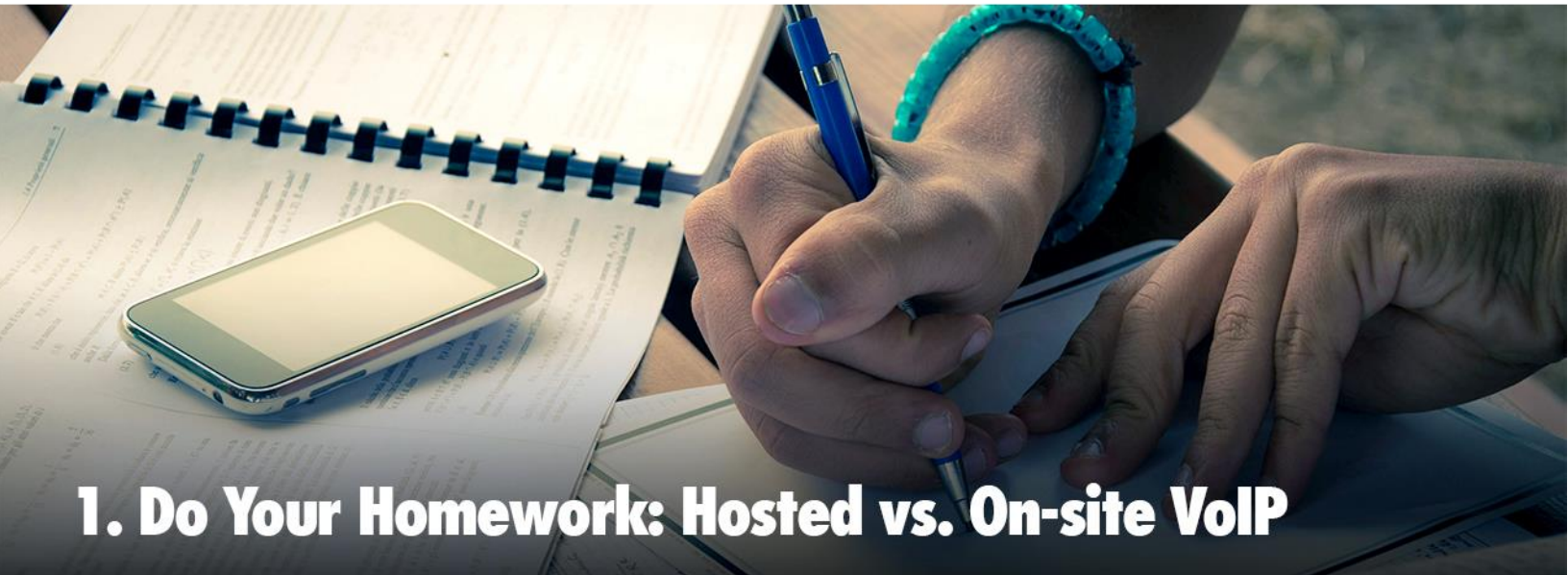
1. Do Your Homework: Hosted vs. On-site VoIP

Hosted and on-site VoIP systems each come with their own set of advantages and disadvantages, and your choice will largely rest on how much of the heavy lifting you want to do. With a hosted service, phones are connected through the internet to a provider that manages equipment in an off-site cloud data center. Hosted VoIP services are typically easy to setup and incur lower maintenance costs. The downside of this option is that it can be more difficult to expand or change your service down the line and your phones are at the mercy of an internet connection. On-site VoIP, while requiring additional setup feeds and on-going maintenance efforts, will give you more control and flexibility over your system.

2. Understand Your Requirements

Before you sign on with a VoIP vendor, it's important to assess the near- and long-term needs of your business. How many employees do you currently need to support? Do you have plans to add more staff? Do you have plans to expand to multiple office locations? You want to invest in a system that will support current staff and scale easily for growth without overpaying for hardware and features you don't need.

3. Pick Your Features Wisely

You will also want to think about the features your business needs to run smoothly. Beyond the core necessities that most VoIP vendors offer, features can range from call forwarding and screening, to more complex features such as voicemail-to-email convergence and auto attendant. Don't underestimate the options you might require – even small businesses can benefit from a set of advanced features that may make them appear larger to their clients over the phone.

4. Focus on the Numbers

The bottom line is important when it comes to settling on a VoIP vendor, but be sure to investigate the total cost of ownership for each system – this includes everything from setup costs, monthly fees, and on-going maintenance costs. Hosted VoIP systems have lower upfront setup costs and recurring monthly fees, while on-premise systems rack up more in deployment and hardware costs.

5. Business System Integration

The ability to integrate your VoIP system with your ERP or CRM platform is another selling point for many businesses. Also be sure to ask vendors if their phone system has an API for integration with other communications applications such as video conferencing or collaboration tools.

6. Plan for Mobility

Today's worker is no longer chained to their desk, and neither should your phone system. There are plenty of VoIP systems that cater to today's mobile workforce, providing features that make it easier for your staff to telecommute and keep in touch while they are on the road. Find Me Follow Me (FMFM) is a feature that allows employees to take calls as if they are sitting at their desks while they are travelling or working outside of the office. Presence, an extension of FMFM technology, is a feature that actually tracks an employee down based on email or call activity from a particular location instead of passively rerouting their calls.

7. Do a Pulse Check

Do you know how long your VoIP provider is going to stay in business? The VoIP market has experienced a few shakeups in recent years, with several mergers and reorganizations taking place in the industry. Find out how long vendors have been in business and what their short- and long-term goals are for their products and services. By doing some basic research on your shortlist, you will be able to identify any red flags and assess their overall viability.

8. Don't Settle on Service

What kind of customer and technical support can you expect from your VoIP vendor? Find out what the hours of support are and where their support center is located in relation to your office. Even just a few hours of phone downtime can cost a business thousands, so it's important to confirm with your vendor that they have the capability to solve any issues quickly and smoothly.

About Guides for VoIP

Guides for VoIP is a resource that provides insight and analysis into all-things VoIP in order to help educate potential voice-over-IP buyers about the products and technology that they are considering purchasing. Guides for VoIP is owned by PureB2B, a lead generation and data provider that connects marketers with buyers to accelerate the technology and business solutions sales process.

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