Guide to VoIP and Unified Communications

Did you know?
Users spent $1791 million on Unified Communications-as-a-Service in 2018, up 21% from the year before.

The VoIP-based US Industry has grown >20% YoY since 2015. (Gartner)
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Effective communication is essential to the success of your business. Your communications setup directly impacts your customer service, client relationships, and overall company reputation.

A company that’s difficult to reach, or operates in an outdated manner compared to its competitors, is less likely to win and retain business. On the flip side, having a system that enables employees to communicate clearly, easily, and in a way that suits them will support collaboration, boost productivity, and increase job satisfaction. This produces more engaged and profitable teams. Ultimately, the way you communicate affects your bottom line.

We’ve put together this guide to fill you in on everything you need to know about VoIP and Unified Communications, so you can invest in a system that allows your company to reach its full potential.

Whether you’re completely new to VoIP, or an existing VoIP user looking for the top features and best value provider, we’ll help you weigh up the pros, cons, and costs surrounding each decision factor. We’ll take you through every type of phone system, from the traditional to the virtual, and tell you what to look out for – as well as debunking all the jargon (there’s a lot of it!)

2020 is an exciting time to upgrade your business communications framework, as the development of Unified Communications offers up powerful integration opportunities between platforms such as email, messaging, and conferencing, in addition to calls. The benefits of connecting these functionalities, to your company’s efficiency and service standards, are immeasurable.

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We’re confident this whitepaper will make it easy for you to choose the right solution to supercharge your business. If you have any further questions in mind, you can always visit us at www.tech.co for more information, plus the latest provider and product reviews. We tell it like it is. You’ll be an expert in no time.

Jennifer Pinches,
Business Telephones Editor, Tech.co
What is VoIP?

What is a PBX?

The best way to explain VoIP is to start with the basics, so let’s begin with a traditional PBX. **PBX** stands for Private Branch Exchange, and is a telephone network used by businesses to accept calls through the **PSTN** and route them to the right departments. Put simply, it allows a company to have more phones than lines. Naturally, all internal calls using the PBX are free.

PBXs are traditionally located on the business premises, with the company responsible for upkeep and troubleshooting. While a PBX is essential for companies expecting large call volumes, the traditional systems are being abandoned for more modern solutions – which leads us onto the IP-PBX.

What is an IP-PBX?

**IP-PBXs** are Internet Protocol Private Branch Exchange systems. They are very similar to the PBX systems of old, but are much more flexible, thanks to their ability to handle data over their internet connection. This means users can employ Unified Communications to share **richer information** such as written messages and video, as well as conduct audio phone calls. IP-PBXs are also easier to manage and **scale** than a traditional PBX, as they are managed with a web-based interface, making them much more **accessible**. IP-PBX systems can be hosted either onsite, or offsite by an external agency.

*De-bunk all the VoIP jargon in our Glossary*
So, What is VoIP?
A VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone system is just another way of describing a setup that makes calls over an internet connection, rather than a traditional phone line. Any phone connected to an IP-PBX is a VoIP phone. The terms IP-PBX phone (or IP-phone) and VoIP phone can be used interchangeably.

Companies offering VoIP most commonly use the term to refer to a “hosted” (offsite) solution. This gives users maximum flexibility, and is markedly cheaper than the setup required for a traditional PBX phone call. It’s also a lot easier to manage ‘virtual’ calls. Agents can use pretty much any internet-enabled device – from a laptop to a mobile to a tablet – to connect to the internet and handle calls, and businesses aren’t tied to any traditional phone hardware.

How Does VoIP Work?
VoIP phone systems convert audio waves to digital signals, which are sent wirelessly in data packets. This allows a user to connect to a telephone through the internet, rather than through a traditional copper PSTN wire. These data packets can condense far more information than can travel through a traditional phone line, allowing VoIP phones to send and receive texts, video, or other information, in addition to audio. This is referred to as Unified Communications.

“SIP Trunking” is the technology that makes many VoIP systems possible. It translates incoming analog signals to digital, so VoIP users can still receive calls from traditional phone lines. By adding SIP trunking, businesses with pre-existing PSTN phone banks can be converted into hybrid VoIP phone networks with relatively little effort or cost. To make outbound calls from VoIP to traditional phone lines, a process called “address translation” is used.
VoIP vs Traditional PBX Phone Systems

Here’s a quick look at the benefits inherent to each of these types of phone systems.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VoIP</th>
<th>Traditional PBX</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td>System for 12 users around $800</td>
<td>System for 12 users around $2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pros</strong></td>
<td>▶ Disruptive technology</td>
<td>▶ Excellent audio quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ Lots of competition wanting your business</td>
<td>▶ Tried and tested technology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ Inexpensive</td>
<td>▶ Not affected by power outages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ Flexible</td>
<td>▶ System already familiar to employees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ Get more than just audio calls with Unified Communications</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ Contact customers from anywhere, and with most connected devices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▶ Low maintenance costs</td>
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<td><strong>Cons</strong></td>
<td>▶ Reliant on good internet connection</td>
<td>▶ Technology is outdated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Can be knocked out during power outage</td>
<td>▶ Scaling is costly</td>
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<td><strong>Best for</strong></td>
<td>▶ Small to medium sized businesses with a view to expansion</td>
<td>▶ The largest companies or those with a static staff count that don’t have access to reliable internet</td>
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As the table highlights, VoIP’s benefits edge out PBX’s benefits overall. VoIP is much cheaper with lower maintenance costs, while also providing greater and more flexible features. Granted, the biggest benefit to PBX, unbeatable audio quality, isn’t to be overlooked. However, thanks to advances in internet quality and stability, VoIP calls are increasingly high-quality. In addition, the best VoIP providers will always set up fail safes so that even if your internet or power fails, calls can be redirected to mobile devices.

Read more about VoIP vs PBX on Tech.co
Low Cost
A VoIP phone system is less expensive than a traditional PBX system for several reasons. First, the setup and installation fees, needed to add the dedicated phone lines required by a PBX system, can be avoided entirely. Secondly, there’s no need to buy any additional hardware, such as phone handsets. What’s more, the lack of on-premise servers in ‘Hosted’ scenarios means no ongoing maintenance fees or staff requirements. VoIP software subscriptions can even cost as little as under $20 per user, per month.

Scalable
Adding new staff to a VoIP system is as simple as updating your subscription. Most VoIP providers can retrofit your subscription to suit as many users as you need, whenever you need them. After all, it’s in the provider’s best interests to make it easy to scale. As a result, you’ll be able to keep costs low, raising them only as your business grows and you can afford the additional investment.

The same number, wherever you are
With VoIP, your staff can use the same phone numbers no matter where they are. Make business calls from your garage, your co-working space, your old office, your new office, or even abroad. You won’t need to bother with registering country-specific phone numbers to work internationally, as staffers can place calls to and from anywhere, as long as they have an internet connection. Customers calling in can use an international or local number, which will send the call straight to your business. All this flexibility is due to the virtual system that defines VoIP: Your calls are digitized as they enter the system, leaving the call free to connect to any phone number.

No maintenance worries
With hosted VoIP, your service provider handles any maintenance, saving you the additional cost of employing a dedicated member of staff for IT tasks like updating and debugging. This is especially advantageous for small companies.
Save space
An on-premise system takes up physical space, as well as upping your electricity and maintenance bills. Snaking telephone wires can even constitute a fire hazard, as well as cramping your staffers’ style. With hosted VoIP, you can avoid the hassle of navigating a physical PBX on site. In fact, you don’t need a permanent physical office space at all.

Add new features
VoIP’s internet-powered software system lets you add any new features your team needs in an instant, without requiring your business to pay upfront for a bundle of features you won’t initially use. Common add-ons include call recording, a conference bridge, and a “call me now” popup window, which lets customers call your team directly from a page on your company website. Other useful extras might include the “barge” feature – which allows a third participant to enter a call between two users – or an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) interface.

Not just audio calls - Unified Communications
VoIP’s internet-powered approach means that the system can handle video calls and written data just as easily as it can connect audio calls. It can also integrate with a range of other data sources and existing business software, such as Outlook or G Suite. With the top providers, you’ll be able to:

- Host internal or external conferences
- Use collaboration tools, such as interactive whiteboards
- Send and receive instant messages
- Communicate via a mobile app
- Manage email and social media communications, as well as standard business calls, all on the same system

Once your business adopts an internet-based approach, VoIP calls are just the beginning. These added integrations will significantly boost your team’s efficiency and productivity, and they’re simply not an option when working with an outdated PBX phone system. Unified Communications allows businesses to consolidate services which would otherwise suffer from the extra costs and friction that additional subscriptions can bring.
Unified Communications

- VoIP
- Mobile App
- Text/SMS
- Instant Messaging
- Real-time presence monitoring
- Audio Conferencing
- Video Conferencing
- Email
- Fax
- Voicemail
- Screen and File Sharing
- Collaborations Tools
Hosted VoIP vs On Premise VoIP

Once you’ve decided to save your company time and money by switching to VoIP, there’s another important decision to make. Do you have the system on your premises, or do you let a third party handle everything for you? Or do you opt for a mixture of both? There is no right or wrong answer, as we explain below:

**Hosted VoIP**
With a hosted VoIP system, your company pays a dedicated VoIP provider to handle the hardware end for you. You pay a subscription fee, usually costed per member of staff, and get access to a range of VoIP features on offer. This means that there’s no equipment needed at your end (apart from your phones and computers, but you should have those anyway).

- **Pros**: Little to no set-up cost, easy to add new features, easy to scale, no concerns about maintenance, get set up within minutes
- **Cons**: Reliance on third party, potential service interruptions outside your control, might not be as customizable as you would like

**On-Premise VoIP**
As the name suggests, an on-premise VoIP system involves an IP-PBX that sits in your office and is maintained by your employees (as circled in the diagram overleaf). While it doesn’t suit everyone, some companies prefer the autonomy, and it can be especially cost effective for large businesses.

- **Pros**: Full control over system, tight rein on security, can customize to your needs, your business owns all equipment
- **Cons**: Expensive and disruptive initial set-up, dedicated staff resources needed, adapting the system to accommodate a growing business can be costly and complex
**Diagram: How VoIP Works**

VoIP phone systems can connect business callers using a wide range of internet-enabled devices. The on-premise IP-PBX *(circled)* is bypassed in hosted VoIP scenarios, where call management is handled entirely by your VoIP provider.

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**Hybrid VoIP**

A hybrid VoIP system is a mixture of both a traditional phone system and VoIP. Sometimes companies will use this as a stepping stone to transitioning to a full VoIP system. An example might be a company that has a traditional, analog PBX system in place, but upgrades it to connect to the internet as well.

- **Pros:** Easy migration to full VoIP at a later date, limits disruption for those staff that don’t need VoIP
- **Cons:** Operating two systems instead of one means extra costs and upkeep, and it’s not as simple to scale as a hosted VoIP set up
How Much Does VoIP Cost?

A VoIP phone system can be as inexpensive as just $25 per user, per month. The financial investment is, on average, thousands of dollars per month cheaper than a traditional PBX. Include the tough-to-quantify advantages of more advanced features and centralization of work, and VoIP comes out even farther ahead in terms of value. Exact VoIP costs will vary depending on your business needs and choices. Here’s a breakdown of the biggest cost factors to consider:

Hosting vs. On-Premise
If you opt for a hosted VoIP system, you’ll rely on a third-party VoIP provider to maintain the software that you license. With an on-premise VoIP system, you’ll need to install and maintain the hardware as well as the software, but you’ll gain more control over the process. The big difference? Hosted VoIP systems require far less of an up-front investment. Installing an on-premise system can cost between $500 and $1,000 per user up front, followed by ongoing maintenance costs. Hosted systems cost between $25 and $40 per user, per month.

Setup costs
A hosted VoIP system has low to zero setup costs. While you’ll need computers, any major VoIP provider’s software will operate on those you already own. If your team will be making phone calls often, you might want to buy handsets (which start at $80 and can be as expensive as $300) or headsets (from $40 each, to around $300).

Per-user costs
With a hosted VoIP license, you’ll be able to update your subscription as you scale up your team. Most providers will charge a specific additional amount for each user, often lowering the per-user price as the number of users grows higher.

Subscription level costs
Finally, most major VoIP providers will offer different pricing tiers that provide an increasing variety of features. A basic subscription might include VoIP calls, voicemail, and limited customer support, a mid-level subscription might add detailed service reports, and an enterprise-level one may offer large-scale conferencing and a dedicated customer service agent. The best VoIP providers will offer Unified Communications in their entry and mid-range pricing tiers.
In the modern business phone system, a handful of specific features are becoming increasingly commonplace, and all of them rely on the added functionality offered by VoIP technology.

**Unified Communications (UC)**
As mentioned above, access to UC is a huge reason businesses choose a top VoIP Provider to run their communications. With UC, rather than using separate networks and devices, the system centralizes phone, email, chat, mobility, video, and call center capabilities, and allows a business to control them from a desktop interface. Along with more efficient customer service, UC promotes a more unified and confident workforce.

**Call Forwarding**
When a call is received at a designated number – your business’s main line, for example – the call forwarding feature allows the system to be configured to automatically forward the call to other pre-set numbers, such as your cell or home line (if you happen to be working remotely or from home.) Alternate numbers can be programmed to ring simultaneously, or in a user-defined order. The result: Greater mobility, fewer missed calls, and better service.

**Conference Bridge**
This feature allows multiple callers to participate in a phone call through a DID or PIN number that each participant can select after calling in to the meeting, no matter their location or the device they are calling from (traditional landline, cell phone, IP softphone, etc.) The efficient meetings that result can boost internal communication without bumping up travel costs.
Video Conferencing
Video conference calling works like an audio conference bridge, but includes live videos of all the callers. It is often available as an add-on to a core VoIP service, as part of Unified Communications. Most VoIP video conferencing services also include call recording, an ability which is limited or non-existent on other video chat apps like Skype or Google Hangouts.

Auto Dialer Software
Auto dialer is an electronic device or software that automatically dials telephone numbers through the internet. It can be configured to deliver pre-recorded messages, such as appointment reminders and other updates. Many include templates that can be configured to address each call recipient individually, as well as match time and day information, making calls feel more personalized.

Predictive Dialer
This feature automatically calls telephone numbers in a particular sequence, identifying no-answers, answering machines, disconnected lines and busy signals, all while predicting when a live operator will be ready to connect with the next recipient. With responsive agents, this feature can dramatically cut down on the dead time between customer calls being answered.

Automatic Call Distribution (ACD)
The ACD system sorts through incoming calls and distributes them to specific operators using pre-set criteria, such as the customer’s phone number, the selected incoming line to the system, or the time of day. It’s a particularly useful feature for businesses receiving high volumes of incoming, rather than outgoing calls.
Monitor, Whisper & Barge
These three related features are especially useful for training staff on their phone skills, whether in sales or customer service. ‘Monitor’ allows a third user to professionally eavesdrop on calls, whether for quality assurance or to gain insight on customer queries or issues. ‘Whisper’ takes this one step further, allowing managers to support and advise their colleagues, without being heard by the caller. ‘Barge’ makes it possible for a third party to join the call completely if necessary, heard by both the agent and the caller.

Auto Attendant
Also sometimes called a digital or virtual receptionist, an auto-attendant is a voice menu system that greets and guides callers through numbered options so that they can be transferred to the relevant departments or extensions within the company.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR)
An IVR is similar to an auto-attendant feature, but more advanced, as it can also collect and provide detailed information. For example, an IVR could record how satisfied callers are by them dialling a number between 1 and 5, help a caller make a purchase by securely receiving their credit card numbers, or pull up a customer record by having the caller input their date of birth.

Automated IVR systems can handle high volumes of incoming calls, reduce costs, and improve customer experiences by providing access to information and services 24 hours a day, without the need for human staffing around the clock.
When considering the type of VoIP phone your business will rely on, four main options are available to you: traditional desk, cordless or wireless, soft, and conferencing. Here, we offer a little more information on what to expect from each.

**Traditional phone**
The "normal" VoIP phone looks and functions like a familiar landline handset, but is designed to use an internet connection to take and place calls. While it works like a desk phone, these VoIP phones support far more features, including a way to automatically forward a call to a mobile, or to transcribe audio into an email.

While traditional desk VoIP phones can cost as low as $80 and as high as $300, the best options are between $99 and $199. At a minimum, you should expect touchscreen and Bluetooth compatibility, as well as HD voice quality. Conference call support can be a differentiator between phones: Some only support three-way local conferencing, while others support five-way conferencing.

Tech.co [Top 10 VoIP Desk Phones]

**Cordless or wireless phone**
The cordless VoIP phone operates like a traditional desk handset, but with one additional perk: Users can walk around freely within their workspace while on a call, as long as they stay within range of the phone's cradle. A wireless phone is like a cordless one, but it does not require an operating base to be close by, instead connecting directly to the network router.

A cordless phone operates via built-in Wi-Fi or a DECT transceiver located in its base. The operating range of the base station varies depending on the phone, with an average of around 150 feet. Costs range from $80 to $350. Talk time, or the amount of time you can continuously use a handset before it needs to recharge, is a price-determining factor: Any cordless or wireless phone should last 12 hours, but the pricier ones last as long as 24 or 30 hours.

Tech.co [Top 10 Cordless Phones]
**Softphone app**

The “soft” in softphone refers to the fact that these phones are entirely virtual. They’re a software application which is installed onto a desktop computer, mobile device, or both. Once installed, the software allows users to place and receive calls, video or text from their VoIP provider, just as if they had a physical handset. They’re the cheapest option.

Pricing is often between $15 and $55. Many business VoIP providers like RingCentral or 8x8 offer their own softphone app, packaging it with their VoIP services at an additional charge or even for free. Considerations when picking out a softphone should include audio quality, the types of third-party integrations it supports, and the useability of the interface — after all, your team will be looking at this software on a daily basis.

Tech.co [Top 10 Softphone Apps For Business](#)

**Conference phone**

A conference phone is a hardware device that is designed to allow entire rooms of participants to send and receive calls, as a group. An audio speaker replaces the handheld receiver. They are best for B2B, large businesses’ internal use, or conferencing facilities when teams can’t meet face-to-face.

Costs can vary widely, ranging from $150 to $1,400, though many popular options are between $400 and $600. Common features of conference phones include a touchscreen display, high-quality audio, and a 360-degree microphone range of between 10 and 20 feet. Some devices may include additional wireless microphones as an optional way to extend the mic range by an additional 50 feet or so.

Tech.co [Top 10 Conference Phones](#)
Can I use my existing telephones with VoIP?
This will depend on the telephone system you currently have, but if it’s not compatible, there are plenty of dedicated VoIP phones available. It’s also worth remembering that one of the positives of VoIP is that you don’t even need a traditional phone. You can use the system in conjunction with a cell phone, or even make calls through your computer.

Does VoIP provide high quality sound and call connectivity?
The top VoIP providers will implement a Quality of Service (QoS) feature to ensure the highest level of service at all times. The QoS process will prioritize certain VoIP features over others, such as sound quality, to ensure uninterrupted activity. Since VoIP services rely on the internet, they can be sluggish if too much data is being transferred over a network at once, resulting in distorted call quality. The QoS feature addresses this by prioritizing audio in two different ways. First, it classifies data, ensuring real-time audio and video comes through first, followed by less time-sensitive data like email. Second, it queues data, sending audio to the front of the line. The feature helps VoIP phones avoid dropped or garbled calls even on a sub-par broadband network.

What happens to my VoIP system if my internet goes down?
If your office internet connection is disrupted, your office telephone system will be too, as VoIP relies solely on being online. This is why one of the best precautions you can take when opting for a VoIP system is finding a reliable internet provider to complement it.

On the other hand, while your office phones may be down, you’ll still be able to access your VoIP line via a mobile device such as a smartphone or laptop. Leading companies will set calls up to automatically reroute to such devices and numbers, in the case of an office connection drop.

How long does it take to get set up with VoIP?
If you have a computer with an internet connection, that’s all you need to get started today with Hosted VoIP – no time consuming installation to schedule, and no start up fees required!
What’s the difference between VoIP and Unified Communications?
UC is one of the best benefits offered by VoIP providers. Once you switch to a leading VoIP provider to manage your calls, you can also unify your other communication methods into a powerful single platform, with multiple uses. UC encompasses so much more than just audio Voice over Internet Protocol calls, such as video conferencing, instant messaging, and collaboration tools. It’s a must-have for businesses upgrading their networks.

How do I find the best VoIP Provider for my business?
There are a number of factors to consider when choosing a VoIP provider, as we’ll explain on the following pages.
How to Choose a VoIP Provider

Here are the most important elements to consider when picking out the best VoIP vendor for your business.

**Budget**
First, you need to have an estimated budget. There are two types of costs to consider: Upfront costs, which will be significantly higher for an on-premise system, and ongoing costs, which are usually calculated per user, per month for a hosted system.

**Business Size**
How many users will need the VoIP service? Knowing this will help you compare costs from leading VoIP providers, as well as identify the quantity of new equipment you may need.

**Hardware Requirements**
If your existing phones and headsets are outdated or incompatible with VoIP, and you’re not happy to switch to a softphones-only approach, you’ll need to replace them. Some VoIP providers will offer to provide top of the range VoIP desk phones or headsets as part of their service, while some will simply recommend equipment you can buy from a range of third parties. You might prefer the reassurance of using a provider’s own top-of-the-range handsets, or the flexibility and potential cost-savings of choosing your own.

**Essential Features**
Consider which of the top VoIP features would benefit your business most. Not every VoIP provider offers the same features, so decide which are essential for you and which ones you can do without. Do many of your team members work remotely? The VoIP provider you choose will need to be able to accommodate them – perhaps through a softphone app. Could your business benefit from consolidated calls, conferencing, email integration, chat, and more? Look for a provider that offers Unified Communications to get maximum value.
Hosted, On-Premise, or Hybrid
You'll need to decide early on which type of VoIP system fits your business needs: On-premise, which costs more but puts you in charge; hosted, which pairs a lower cost with a lower responsibility for maintenance; or hybrid, which upgrades a pre-existing PBX system into a VoIP-equipped one. Choosing a hosted solution will give you the most flexibility, choice, and competition between VoIP providers.

Support
Once you've purchased your new VoIP system, you'll need high quality support. Investigate the support and training options offered by each potential VoIP provider – some will offer 24/7 phone and email support, or even a dedicated representative. Consider if you'll need this, or if 9 'til 5 will do. And remember: For an on-premise system, you may need to hire your own IT team.

Functionality
How reliable is the system itself? Check out online reviews and uptime statistics for the provider you're interested in. Some VoIP providers will offer demos or trials, so you can see if the service offers all the features you need, with a user-friendly interface.

Compare the best VoIP providers
Tech.co can help connect you with a range of leading VoIP providers that meet your business needs. [Find out more](#)
Tech.co can help connect you with a range of leading VoIP providers that meet your business needs. Find out more...
Glossary

**ACD:** Automatic Call Distribution. A feature businesses can take advantage of when they use a VoIP phone system.

**Address translation:** Address translation allows VoIP users to make outbound calls to traditional landline phones. VoIP providers may charge slightly more for calls placed to landline numbers – however, the per-minute charges are still usually lower than landline to landline calls, as much of the connection remains digital. Plus, with the rapid growth of VoIP, calling analog phones will become less and less of a necessity as time goes on.

**Analog Private Branch Exchange (PBX):** A traditional piece of hardware that can route calls from the PSTN to more than one phone, per physical phone line.

**DECT:** Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications.

**DID number:** Direct Inward Dialing number – a virtual phone number used to direct calls internally from a specific locality, or to a specific employee or department.

**Hosted (IP-PBX):** An IP-PBX managed off-site by a third party. A virtual piece of equipment provided by your VoIP supplier to route and manage calls to your business numbers, using the internet.

**Hybrid PBX:** Traditional PBX hardware that has been upgraded to add internet protocol functionality, so it can now connect to both the PSTN and modern VoIP and UC systems.

**IP:** Internet Protocol.

**IP-PBX:** A PBX that manages calls using the internet.

**IVR:** Interactive Voice Response. A feature businesses can take advantage of when they use a VoIP phone system.

**Landline:** a traditional analog phone that connects callers through physical phone lines.
**On-Premise (IP-PBX):** An IP-PBX that sits physically on-site at a business premises and is owned and managed internally, allowing calls and other communications to be transferred over the internet.

**PIN number:** Personal Identification Number, used for security verification.

**POTS:** Plain Old Telephone System. A single phone line, usually for a home.

**Presence:** A feature of VoIP systems where you can see, in real time, which employees are online and available at present.

**PSTN:** Public Switched Telephone Network. The network of physical phone lines traditionally used by telephones to communicate.

**QoS:** Quality of Service.

**SIP Trunking:** A way of converting analog calls incoming from the PSTN to digital VoIP phone calls. The term “SIP” refers to the "session initiation protocol" that lets data packets be exchanged online, while “trunking” is telecommunications jargon for a telephone exchange from one line to another - or, in the case of SIP trunking, from a physical phone line to a virtual one.

**Softphone:** A device that can be used as a phone through its internet connection and software; a modern alternative to a traditional phone handset. With VoIP technology, calls can be made and received by a desktop computer, a mobile app, or a VoIP-enabled phone; any device, as long as the user has broadband internet.

**UC:** Unified Communications. An extension of VoIP calling and a top benefit of employing VoIP technology. UC encompasses a range of other services in addition to audio, such as email and app integration. UC is a must-have for US businesses upgrading their phone systems in 2019.

**UCaaS:** Unified Communications as a Service. (Also known as UC).

**VoIP:** Voice over Internet Protocol.