



Using VoIP to Save Money and Improve Efficiency: Seven Tips for SMBs

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The ability to stay in touch by telephone is a must for businesses of all sizes, but finding the right features at an affordable cost used to be a major challenge for small to mid-sized companies. Thanks to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology, smaller enterprises have more options today than ever. Here are some tips to help you make the right choices:

1. Make the most of features – The standard equipment for a small business used to be a two-line phone and an answering machine. Those days are long gone: Today's small businesses embrace phone features once reserved only for the IBMs of the world. Find-me-follow-me, selective call forwarding and simultaneous ring to the desk phone and cell phone are all standard features with today's hosted VoIP services.

2. Use VoIP to run a leaner business – In today's economy, the successful businesses are the ones that can be lean and efficient. VoIP provides a clear digital signal and cost savings opportunities that were unheard of 10-12 years ago. Whether it's inbound toll-free or long distance, telephony costs continue to drop. And with a hosted VoIP model, a large investment in PBX hardware that will be obsolete in a few years is no longer required.

3. Throw out old ways of thinking – Businesses used to shop for phones, phone lines and long distance service from three different vendors. The new era of hosted VoIP means this way of thinking is obsolete. You can now typically purchase an all-inclusive calling package per extension that includes all the latest phone system features and unlimited minutes. Often the VoIP provider will also provide the phones for a small monthly fee.

4. Say goodbye to the "phone guy" – We have all experienced the cost and inconvenience of having to call the "phone guy" who maintains the company phone system. Every time you add an employee, move an extension or want to change the prompts, here comes the guy with the tool belt. With hosted VoIP, business owners can

take back control of their phones. You can easily make changes with just a few clicks through a web portal.

5. Maximize mobility – VoIP allows business professionals to unchain themselves from their desks. Sales reps can have their calls forwarded to their cell phones in the field. Repair experts can handle new inquiries and customer service calls while at a job site. A manager can have some agents work from home but still maintain their connection to the office phone system.

6. Make sure business continues no matter what – If your business loses power, you'll most likely lose your Internet connection and business phones as well. Reputable hosted VoIP providers can offer a failover solution in the event your business goes dark. You can pre-configure individual extensions to failover to a cell phone in an emergency. Don't wait until disaster strikes to think about how to forward calls.

7. Use email as your new voicemail platform – More and more companies and consumers are having voicemails forwarded to their email inbox. With this new feature, you can play the voicemails on your PC for a hands-free experience instead of listening through your handset and scribbling down the information.

Setting up an efficient telephony system used to be a major hassle for smaller enterprises, and the costs for the latest features were often prohibitive. VoIP technology has significantly expanded the options available, allowing SMBs to save time and money. By following these tips, you can make the most of your VoIP choices.

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