The professional services' guide to the benefits of a modern phone system

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TELECOMS CONNECTIVITY MOBILE SECURITY

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Your traditional phone system could be holding back your business. Discover how moving to a modern phone system could help you achieve your business goals.

Why your traditional phone system could be costing you more than money

Many professional services organisations are still relying on ISDN and on-site PBX systems for their telephony. It's easy to see why. ISDN is an established technology; it's familiar and it works. But in today's fast-paced business world, is this enough to help your business remain competitive? The technologies you adopt within your business need to be flexible enough to support your business processes, adaptable enough to enable your organisation to grow and develop, and versatile enough to help you deliver high quality customer service.
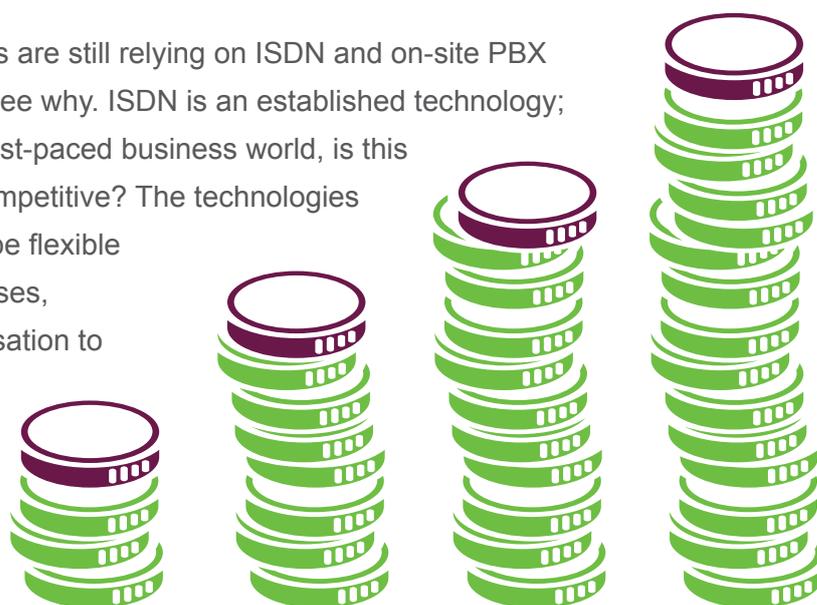
The ISDN standard was developed in the 1980s - a time when mobile phones were the size of a brick and few people outside of academia used the internet. Today's world is a different environment entirely. Organisations now need to be agile, adaptable and flexible in order to thrive, and for this, they need a telecoms system that supports all of these elements. With advancements in IP-based technology ISDN is, in the majority of cases, no longer the best fit for this purpose.

Using a traditional phone system like ISDN may not only cost you more in monetary terms, but it can cost your organisation in other ways. An inflexible and inefficient phone system can reduce employee productivity, have an adverse effect on customer service, and bring your organisation to a standstill in the event of a disaster.

Much like making the move from office-based filing cabinets to a hosted case management application for legal firms, moving to a modern phone system can enable your business to utilise enhanced features that can transform your business and help it to grow.

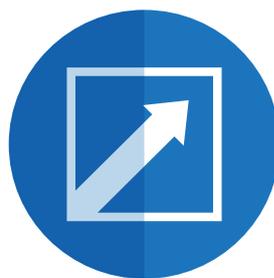## What modern phone systems can offer

If you were to devise a wish-list of benefits you wanted from a modern phone system, it would probably consist of:

Cost-effectiveness   Flexibility   Scalability   Reliability

Resilience   Security   Quality

You would also probably appreciate a phone system that could:

- Help improve employee collaboration and productivity
- Enhance customer service delivery
- Integrate with other business applications
- Quickly adapt to cope with seasonal demands
- Rationalise your existing ISDN estate
- Offer disaster recovery provisions as standard

A phone system that provides this might seem fanciful or, at the very least, hugely expensive, but that isn't the case. A cost-effective telecoms solution that offers all of this (and more) can be affordable for business of all sizes, with SIP trunking.

SIP trunking - a modern telecoms solution for intelligent businesses

A growing number of organisations are migrating from ISDN to SIP trunking.

There were one million SIP trunks in the UK in 2013
This figure is forecast to rise to 3.3 million by 2018

Source: Ilume Research

Thousands of organisations of all sizes across the UK are already reaping the benefits of SIP.

SIP trunking involves connecting your organisation's PBX to the PSTN via an IP connection to a SIP provider's network. With SIP trunking in place, your organisation can take advantage of the many benefits offered by a modern phone system.

How professional services organisations can benefit from SIP

SIP can offer businesses many benefits over traditional ISDN. These include:

Speed of deployment

It can take multiple weeks for new ISDN lines to be ordered and then installed, whereas the lead times for provisioning of a SIP trunking solution can be significantly lower. Once SIP is in place, additional trunks can also be added much more quickly in order to meet increased demand at peak times.

Flexibility

Numbers provided with ISDN are, in the main, geographically defined - unless you pay extra for non geographic numbers. With SIP trunking, you can choose to use the same geographic number, regardless of a site's location. This is useful for businesses that relocate or those that have multiple sites.
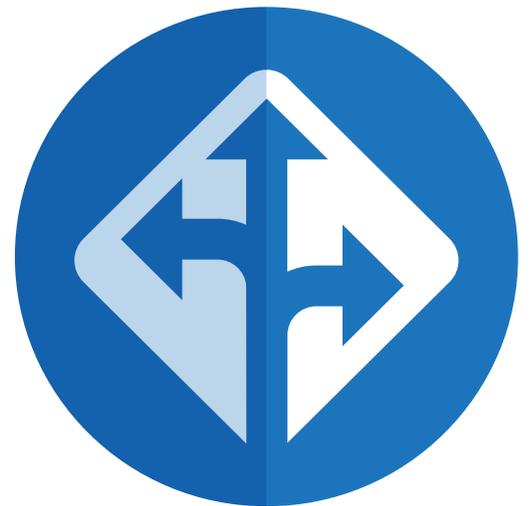
Scalability

With SIP trunking, your phone system can grow as your organisation grows. It's easy to increase the number of lines you require and simple to extend your company phone system to new offices.
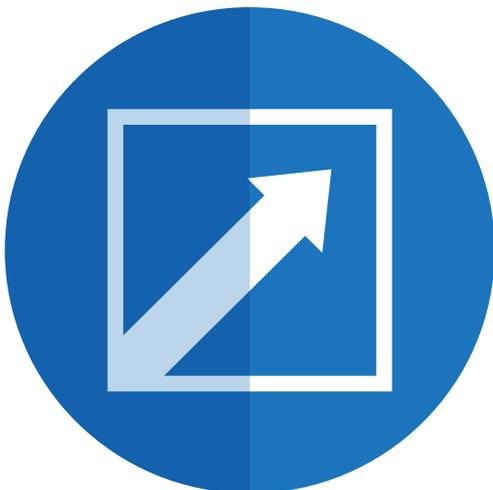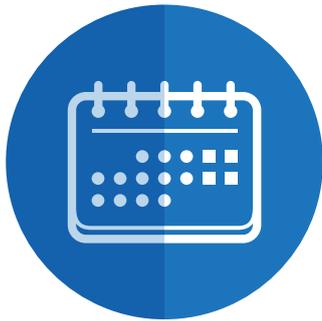
Seasonality

Many businesses have peaks and troughs when it comes to demand for telecoms capacity. A sales or marketing campaign, or even the time of the year, can see demand greatly increase. ISDN is not always the most flexible or cost-effective option to deal with this type of demand. Even if you can increase the number of ISDN lines to meet the demand, you are left paying for unused channels when demand falls. SIP trunking enables organisations to add more lines as and when they need them, and remove them when call volumes fall. With SIP trunking, you pay for what you use; not for what you rent.

Resilience and Reliability

What would happen if your telecoms system failed, or there was a disaster at one of your sites? The nature of ISDN means that it is vulnerable to a single point of failure - if ISDN lines go down at one site, implementing call forwarding can take hours and can be a costly option. It's easy to see how this would gravely affect your organisation's ability to function. Customers, suppliers and contacts would be unable to reach you, leading to frustration at the very least. Reputational damage could be high and the cost to your organisation in lost productivity can be even higher, particularly if fee-earners are left unable to work. SIP trunking can be provisioned to offer automatic call rerouting to other sites and over additional lines, without call forwarding costs, should disaster strike. With SIP trunking, you can have a robust disaster recovery plan in place as part of your standard service.

High quality

SIP can deliver enterprise-grade voice services over your data connectivity, either a suitable existing connection or alternative provision. With both services delivered through a single connection, your organisation can benefit from additional cost savings.

This combination of benefits means that your organisation is able to elevate the level of customer service you offer, gaining a competitive advantage over rivals still using ISDN and enhancing your reputation.

Enhancing your business processes with SIP
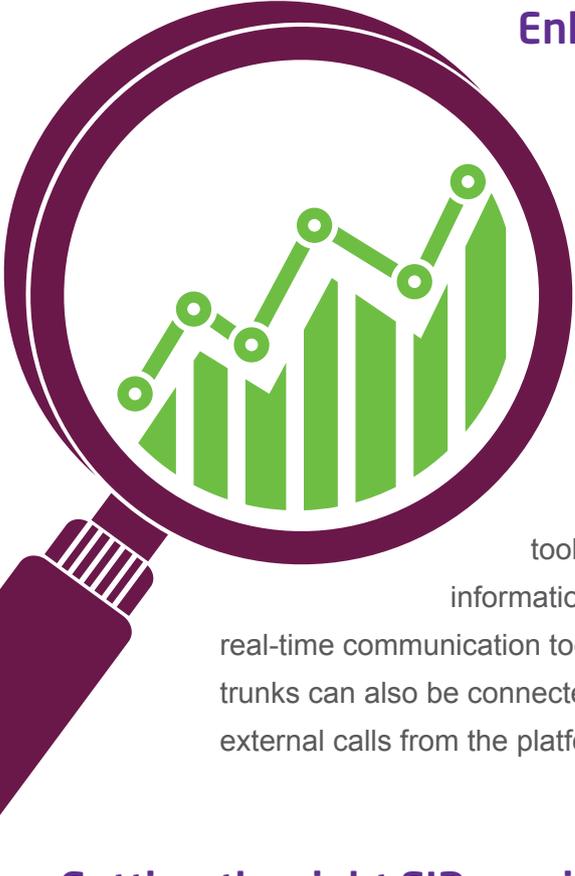
A lot of communication occurs internally with colleagues exchanging data, sharing information and collaborating. If your are a multi-site organisation, this can sometimes be a challenge. SIP trunking can also help improve productivity and collaboration amongst your workforce with improved connectivity between multiple sites through free internal calls. SIP can be integrated with Microsoft Lync, the unified communications solution that includes voice, video, instant messaging and video conferencing. This powerful collaboration tool is widely used throughout the business world. Using Presence information, employees can find each other and then use real-time or non real-time communication tools (such as email or chat) to collaborate or communicate. SIP trunks can also be connected directly to Microsoft Lync, enabling your business to make external calls from the platform and further enhance your customer service delivery.

Getting the right SIP provider

Choosing the right technology is only part of the solution; you also need to find a provider who will deliver the solutions and service that meet your business needs. Key questions to ask include: can the provider utilise your existing data connection, and if not, can they provide the connectivity you need for voice traffic? Can they provide a secure, high capacity fibre network to connect your HQ to your data centre?

What SLAs do they offer for quality of service and disaster recovery? Does the provider have its own secure, national IP network or will your data be carried on the public internet? Does the provider give the option of utilising on-site PBXs or can they be hosted in the cloud? What track record do they have in the business and do they fully understand your business needs?

By choosing the right SIP provider, your business can gain greater flexibility, cost efficiency and enhance its quality of service.
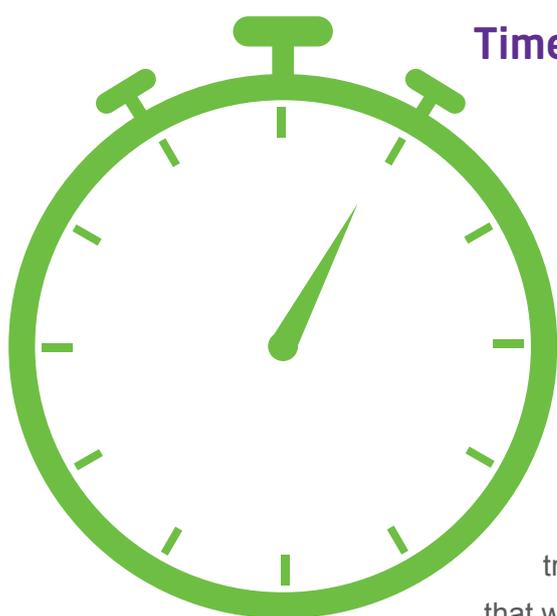
Time for change

The professional services sector is highly competitive and no organisation can afford to stand still. This not only means adapting and developing your business processes, but also the technology that underpins them. If your organisation is still using ISDN, it could be stifling innovation and reducing your efficiency and competitiveness. By making the move to SIP, you could gain the flexibility that enables your organisation to deliver even better customer service and improve employee productivity. With benefits like this, SIP trunking needs to be seriously considered by any organisation that wants to stay ahead.

Takeaways:

- Carry out an audit of your organisation's telecoms system - how effective is your existing telecoms solution?

- Review your disaster recovery plan - how quickly can you restore your telecoms system in the event of a disaster?

- Take the time to explore different providers and the benefits a modern phone system could offer your business