

FASTER, SMARTER, BETTER:
**HOSTED VOICE GIVES YOUR BUSINESS
NEW COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS
AND A COMPETITIVE EDGE**



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There are a lot of ways to describe the growth of cloud-based services: rapid, burgeoning, and even, perhaps, dramatic. But one thing it isn't is surprising – that growth makes a lot of sense. When applications are hosted on a provider's infrastructure – operated, maintained and upgraded by that vendor – businesses reap a host of important benefits. They can get cutting-edge technology without making hefty capital investments. They can pay affordable monthly fees. And they can access hosted voice service at any time, from any location where there is network connectivity.

The real beauty of cloud-based services, however, is that these advantages are just a starting point. Hosted applications can change – and dramatically improve – the way businesses work. Nowhere, perhaps, is that more apparent than when it comes to hosted voice.

Today's businesses need to be mobile and nimble. They need to move fast and often move wide, increasing their footprint without increasing their headaches. They need to be responsive to customers and foster collaboration between employees. In this multi-part guide, created by Comcast Business, companies can see how hosted voice is uniquely positioned to support, and boost, all of these traits – traits that aren't just good for business, but crucial for success.

In the sections that follow, we'll look at topics including:

- How hosted voice empowers today's increasingly mobile workforce.
- The unique – and productivity enhancing – features of cloud-based voice.
- How the best hosted voice systems are flexible enough to let your employees work the way they like, with the devices they prefer.
- The benefits of bundling: Why providers that combine hosted voice service with a dedicated network have an edge over vendors that only sell hosted voice service.
- How to choose a provider that isn't just a vendor, but like a business partner.

PUTTING THE MUSCLE IN MOBILITY: HOW HOSTED VOICE UNTETHERS YOUR WORKFORCE

Not long ago, an employee away from their desk was an employee with limited ability to get the job done. Many of the resources they'd need – like quick access to people and information – were often lacking, resulting in delays and inefficiency. Today, that's no longer the case. Mobile technologies – lead by smartphones, laptops, and high-speed networks – are empowering off-site workers to an unprecedented degree. Not surprisingly, these tools are rapidly catching on. More than 60 percent of North Americans now use their smartphones for work, according to the June 2013 Mobile Workforce Report by iPass Inc.

But there's a challenge: How to leverage these new capabilities to give employees more mobility, and to give companies optimal results. Hosted voice is one way forward-thinking businesses are doing just that.

With cloud-based voice, it is the system's provider that houses and operates the core hardware and software. This service makes the user's location irrelevant. No longer do employees need to be hardwired into an on-premises infrastructure to use their full suite of communications tools, from voicemail to conferencing to speed dialing. Instead, they need only access the cloud from their phone or laptop. And with hosted voice, it's not just traditional tools that users get, but special features expressly designed for mobile users, such as voicemail-to-email capability and a single phone number that rings on any designated device.

The result: a business operating with improved efficiency – and gaining a competitive edge. Indeed, hosted voice makes the following not just possible, but easily achievable:

- **Improved customer communications.** When customers can reach their business contacts via a single number – thanks to cloud-based features like “Be Anywhere” from Comcast Business VoiceEdge™ – they can get faster responses and attention. From troubleshooting to purchase orders, callers can get what they need faster. That translates into better customer service – and stronger customer relationships.
- **Better collaboration with colleagues – and a jump start on innovation.** Getting ahead of the competition – and staying there – requires innovation and rapid development cycles. By giving employees the same communications tools on the go as they have in the office, cloud-based voice helps keep them connected and accessible. A sudden stroke of genius can get communicated, and acted upon, immediately – and collaboration no longer has to wait until everyone is back at their desks.
- **Improved productivity.** The advanced features of hosted voice don't just boost accessibility, but flexibility. Employees can work more effectively no matter where they are, and under conditions that would previously bring business to a halt. When inclement weather – or a sudden emergency – shuts an office, your workforce can still leverage a full suite of voice communications tools. Even when more mundane events – like a mid-day dental appointment – pop up, productivity doesn't have to suffer. With Business VoiceEdge, users can start a call on their office phone and then switch seamlessly to their cell phone. So they can take care of your business even when they have to take care of their own.

THE ANYWHERE, ANYTIME OFFICE: WITH HOSTED VOICE, PRODUCTIVITY IS NO LONGER DESKBOUND

For businesses looking to expand, leverage mobility, and improve customer service, cloud-based voice offers a secret weapon. Actually, it offers several. Advanced features help keep employees accessible and productive no matter where they are – which keeps them in the know, and on top of crucial matters. To see how these capabilities can enhance the way your business works, consider two core features of Comcast's Business VoiceEdge™, a hosted voice solution:

- **Be Anywhere.** Today's employees are increasingly mobile, working from home, from branch offices and client sites, and from hotels and airports. They're also working on an array of devices, including smartphones and laptops. Comcast's "Be Anywhere" feature gives them the flexibility to work where, and how, they want, yet still be readily available for customers, clients, and colleagues. With "Be Anywhere," VoiceEdge users are reachable via a single phone number – so callers need not remember multiple different numbers and hope they dial the right one. Users can choose which device rings – such as their cell phone, home phone, or laptop – when someone dials their office number. They can even set "Be Anywhere" to ring all of their devices simultaneously, with the call automatically handled by whichever answers first. The result: seamless mobility – and the ability to act, and interact, wherever and whenever you need to.
- **Remote Office.** Receiving business calls outside the office is critical, but so, too, is the ability to make and manage them. The "Remote Office" feature of Business VoiceEdge lets mobile users receive calls as easily as if they were sitting at their desks. Employees can access and use their VoiceEdge service – with all features and functionality – from any end point: a home phone, a hotel room phone, a phone at a client site, and so on. In short, any telephone becomes their office phone, complete with extension dialing, call transfers, and conference call capability.

Cloud-based voice may make location irrelevant, but your company's performance will never be. The advanced features of Business VoiceEdge help keep your business running smoothly – and help keep you ahead of the pack.

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PRODUCTIVITY MADE TO ORDER: HOSTED VOICE FITS IN WITH ANY WORKSTYLE

Cloud-based voice delivers financial benefits and eliminates support and maintenance headaches – great news for the C-suite. But what employees want to know is how it impacts the way they do their job. Flexibility is key: Different users rely on different tools, whether it is a traditional phone, smartphone, or laptop. The best hosted voice solutions understand this, and are designed to fit in with any workstyle – to maximize it instead of disrupting it. Comcast's Business VoiceEdge™, for example, features unique components that let employees leverage their tools of choice.

- **Business VoiceEdge Mobile App.** Available as a free download for both iOS and Android, the Business VoiceEdge Mobile App enables subscribers to set and change their 'Be Anywhere' settings from their smartphone – so they are readily available to anyone dialing their office phone number. The app – which features an intuitive user interface designed for smaller screens – also provides access to their company's directory, as well as their voicemail. Users can take advantage of extension dialing, too. And of course, any calls made through the app display the user's business phone number on the other end. So to customers, colleagues, and clients, it will always appear that you're sitting at your desk – even when you are thousands of miles away from it.
- **VoiceEdge Softphone.** Laptop-toting employees also need a full suite of voice features – and the VoiceEdge softphone gives them just that. The software, which works with any PC or Mac, lets users make and receive calls, dial by extension, access voicemail, and forward calls – just like a traditional business phone. But there the similarities end. Softphone users get some handy additional touches, including the ability to see in-coming call alerts while working within an application (such as email or word processing). They'll have the option to take the call, or forward it accordingly – so they can keep working, or drop everything, as circumstances warrant. The VoiceEdge softphone also integrates with a computer's video camera, enabling video calls with HD-quality voice.
- **VoiceEdge Toolbar.** Another way Business VoiceEdge helps users stay accessible without interrupting their workflow is through the Corporate Telephony Toolbar. It's an easy-to-install plug-in that gives users of Microsoft® Outlook, Microsoft Internet Explorer, and Mozilla Firefox one-click access to the VoiceEdge platform. So they can access voicemail and settings, and even make calls with the click of a mouse – all without leaving the application in which they are working.

Cloud-based voice has the potential to revolutionize the way people work – and with advanced features like these, that potential can quickly be realized.

BUNDLE UP:

PROVIDERS PAIRING VOICE AND NETWORK SERVICE HAVE THE EDGE AND GIVE YOU ONE, TOO

Given the advantages of cloud-based voice, its growing popularity among businesses is easy to understand. So, too, is the increasing number of vendors entering the market, each offering its own hosted voice service. How to choose among them? It's an important question and, for many companies, bound to be a challenging one. But coming up with the right answer doesn't have to be difficult.

To start, consider that hosted voice really involves two components: the voice service itself, and the network it runs over. Many vendors offering cloud-based voice sell it as a standalone product. But it really doesn't stand alone, for once you buy the voice service, you have to integrate it with a network. That means two services, from two vendors, with two infrastructures and two support organizations. It also means the integration may not be as seamless, easy, or efficient as you'd like. And if problems arise, you'll first have to determine whose domain it falls under – which only delays the solution.

A provider that can bundle hosted voice with the network can offer a compelling value proposition. When the two key components of cloud-based voice are operated by the same vendor, the integration is built in before you make your first call. Bundled voice and network also means that you have a single point of contact for support – no small thing for businesses that need their questions answered quickly and their troubleshooting done immediately.

Even more importantly, when there is a dedicated network for voice traffic, your calls aren't fighting for bandwidth with everything traveling over your data network.

A dedicated voice network is included in the price, which means not only performance advantages over a la carte solutions, but often financial ones, too. And by monitoring and managing the network itself, Comcast can ensure that voice traffic moves efficiently. That lets it offer service-level agreements guaranteeing that the performance you need is the performance you get. Comcast Business VoiceEdge™ was developed from the ground up to provide the benefits of managed voice and cloud technology.

Today's businesses want to grow their footprint and their opportunities – not their headaches. A provider that can offer voice services with cloud capabilities helps companies to focus less on their technology – and more on their future.

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PARTNERS FOR VOICE – AND FOR THE FUTURE:

USABILITY, EXPANDABILITY KEY TO CHOOSING A PROVIDER

The best hosted voice providers aren't just vendors for your business – they're like business partners. Offering cutting-edge communications tools, after all, is just a starting point. Features have to be accessible to users and easily managed and expanded. That means interfaces that are sophisticated yet simple to learn. It means readily available support and training. And it means a robust infrastructure that covers a wide footprint – as well as some contingencies.

No matter how compelling a hosted voice provider's solution appears, you'll want to do your due diligence before signing up for service. Cover the following points to help cover your bases:

- **How intuitive is the user interface?** Advanced features can be a big plus for a hosted voice system, but their value can quickly decrease – dramatically – if they are too hard to use. By taking a close look at the user interface – and, ideally, even testing it with a representative group of employees – you can avoid products that really are too good to be true.
- **What type of training is available?** Even with an easy to use interface, the system may involve complicated training. Some providers will help your employees get up to speed on a range of topics, from the basics to advanced uses. But it's not just the breadth of training that's important. Users get the most out of these sessions when they are convenient and readily accessible. Comcast Business, for example, offers multiple options for Business VoiceEdge™ users, including Web-based sessions.
- **What management tools are provided?** One of the great advantages of cloud-based voice is that maintenance and upgrades can be managed by the vendor – not your business. Yet that doesn't mean you have to be completely hands-off. At times you may want to manage features, add users, reset passwords, and check usage and billing, among other tasks. Here, too, ease of use is key. Many providers will offer convenient tools such as online management portals.
- **What support is offered?** Even with best-of-breed voice systems, you may have questions. And when you do, you'll want answers, not waits. You'll also want to rest assured that any problems that may crop up are quickly identified and corrected. Customers want support that is both proactive and reactive. That's why Comcast Business offers 24x7x365 monitoring of its network, backed by support teams for business customers.
- **What does the provider's track record, footprint, and future plans look like?** Your voice system is a crucial business asset. As such, it needs to be available and operating efficiently. It also must be able to support any growth you may have down the road, whether you are adding new users or new locations. A provider with a geographically extensive footprint, and – who can deliver robust service will be in the best position to meet your needs, and your plans. Ask, too, about the vendor's roadmap for the future. Cloud-based voice is just getting started, and you'll want to be sure your provider can support all the latest features. With the right partner, the potential of hosted voice – and your company's potential – can be unlimited.

CONCLUSION

For today's businesses, success comes with a long list of prerequisites: agility; mobility; the ability to innovate and provide top-notch customer support. It requires companies to be able to add new employees – and even whole new locations – quickly and seamlessly, as markets and opportunities warrant. It demands that a business's most important resources, like capital and time, are focused where they can have the greatest impact on growth – not on troubleshooting technical systems and infrastructure.

Hosted voice fosters all of these goals – and does so while proving cutting-edge communications tools. Leveraging the power of the cloud, hosted voice can improve accessibility, ensure business continuity, support new trends like telecommuting, and make costs far more manageable and predictable. And the best news of all: This is just the baseline. The most compelling hosted voice systems provide advanced capabilities – like the Comcast Business VoiceEdge™ Mobile App and 'Be Anywhere' feature – that turbocharge your employees' mobility, and bolster your customer relationships.

Cloud-based voice isn't simply a new model for communications. It's a model designed expressly for the way businesses work – or should be working – today. It lets vendors focus on running and maintaining the technology, while companies focus on the innovations and service that bring them growth – and competitive advantage.

ABOUT COMCAST BUSINESS

Comcast Business offers a wide range of scalable Internet, voice, TV and support tools and resources to help your business succeed – and grow.

Our high-speed, high-capacity data, voice and TV services operate across our private, diverse network. With over 149,000 national route miles of fiber, it's the largest facilities-based last mile alternative to the phone company.

INTERNET. When it comes to the Internet, it's all about speed. Comcast Business Internet features downloads up to 150Mbps and uploads up to 20Mbps. And, for customers with more demanding data requirements, we also offer Ethernet services.

VOICE. With three distinct products, each offering customizable options, our Voice solutions can ensure a perfect match for your business...and your budget. Choose among Comcast Business Voice, PRI Trunks, and Business VoiceEdge™.

TV. Comcast Business TV offers competitively priced packages including popular local broadcast and cable networks. You can choose the package that best fits your needs and adds the most value to your business.

COMCAST BUSINESS CLOUD SOLUTIONS. An online marketplace that offers a carefully selected collection of best-in-class business applications for our customers, along with one source for consultation and technical support.

To learn more about all the Comcast Business services that can help take your business to the next level, visit business.comcast.com, or call 800-501-6000 today!

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