Top Five Considerations in Choosing a Hosted VoIP Provider

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR CHOOSING A HOSTED VOICE SOLUTION

Today's workforce is unlike any other. Employees work from anywhere, any time, and expect communication tools to be available 24/7. Hosted Voice solutions enable the hybrid working environment by keeping everyone connected no matter where they are.

Hosted Voice over IP (VoIP) solutions are becoming an increasingly popular choice for their inherent cost savings over traditional telephony and the added convenience of fully managed services.

Industry statistics show that more than one-third of companies adopting VoIP choose hosted services. The percentage will almost certainly increase as more companies become aware of this cost-saving, feature-rich, and scalable alternative to traditional and expensive phone services and equipment.

However, choosing a hosted VoIP provider is not without an element of risk. Not all providers are alike, nor are their services. In fact, service delivery methodology largely determines the voice call quality and thereby creates a positive (or negative) experience. This brief whitepaper provides best-practice guidance in five areas for companies that are evaluating Hosted VoIP services and providers.

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#1: NETWORK AND VOICE QUALITY

Many hosted VoIP providers tout a high-quality voice experience, but neglect to inform potential customers that their voice traffic is quickly handed off to the public Internet, where it is susceptible to jitter and packet loss. This can mean echo and static, making for a distinctively low quality calling experience.

Companies shopping for a VoIP provider should look for quality indicators, including:

- **Business-Class Access.** The bandwidth of the circuit should be based on the quantity of calls to support, the codec used, and the amount of bandwidth desired for data traffic. At Fusion Connect, we can sell business class connections with our voice service. This allows us to guarantee the clarity of the call and to actively monitor the quality.

- **Secure and Reliable SD-WAN.** An SD-WAN solution will help you boost application performance, increase uptime, enable next-gen firewall capabilities, and integrate with cloud providers. Plus, you should experience a dedicated and thorough onboarding process, proactive monitoring, and ongoing account management.

- **Quality of Service (QoS) with Dynamic Bandwidth Allocation.** The provider should guarantee a high level of QoS, using dynamic bandwidth allocation to minimize packet loss.

WHAT MAKES FUSION CONNECT DIFFERENT?

Network-based Quality of Service (QoS) for clear voice service. Combine Voice with Fusion Connect Internet Access for the best call quality and reliability in the industry.

- Crystal-clear HD call quality

- Guaranteed QoS backed by Service Level Agreements

- 99.999% overall availability, the best in the industry

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#2: CLOUD-BASED, FULLY MANAGED SERVICES

Premises-based phone systems that require each phone to be individually programmed are fast becoming a thing of the past.

Phone features can now be delivered via the "cloud." This means that the service provider hosts voice features on its platform—such as auto attendant and mobility-enhancing features like simultaneous and sequential ring (find me/follow me). In addition, it is now possible to integrate IP-based calling with enhanced collaboration features like screen sharing, presence, instant messaging, and video conferencing.

Cloud-based delivery provides numerous benefits, including:

- **Transparent upgrades.** New features and capabilities are delivered transparently via the service provider's network, instead of being programmed into each phone. Easy online access is provided to manage users and features.

- **New technology without capex.** Companies can benefit from technological innovation without large up-front expenditure, and dramatically lower ongoing expenses. Feature delivery is incumbent on the service provider; therefore, companies can focus on their primary business objectives instead of their phone systems. They can also take advantage of the latest features without having to work with a PBX vendor to upgrade their existing phone systems.

- **Built-in disaster preparedness for business continuity.** Hosted services ensure business continuity if a company's physical facilities are damaged or destroyed. Critical capabilities—such as auto attendants and voicemail—are still available in the event of business disruption because they are cloud-based instead of on location. In addition, individual phones can be forwarded to a different location such as another branch office or to employee mobile phones.

WHAT MAKES FUSION CONNECT DIFFERENT?

Simple Self-Service Management.

Our user-friendly customer portal makes it easy to transfer (port) your existing numbers to your Fusion Connect service, manage your services, add new services and equipment, pay your bill, and obtain support from your desktop computer or smart device. Users can manage most of their own settings from their computers and devices and easily make changes when desired.

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#3: A TURNKEY SOLUTION THAT IS EASY TO ADMINISTER

Hosted VoIP solutions require minimal equipment installation—just IP phones, a small Voice gateway device, and a voice router.

The service provider should offer customers installation options that meet their needs and technical expertise. Options should include a self-install, in which the customer installs equipment themselves, and a professional install. A professional install typically involves a certified technician, who handles the installation, and a voice project manager who oversees the whole process.

Once the system is up and running, administering it should be easy and centralized. The provider should offer a simple online portal that allows an administrator to quickly execute moves, additions, and changes as well as order new services and phones, pay a bill, and obtain support. Employees should have access to their own portal for easy access to feature configuration.

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#4: SECURITY AND MONITORING

Companies rely on the free flow of voice and data communications, so they need assurance that the voice platform will be reliable and secure.
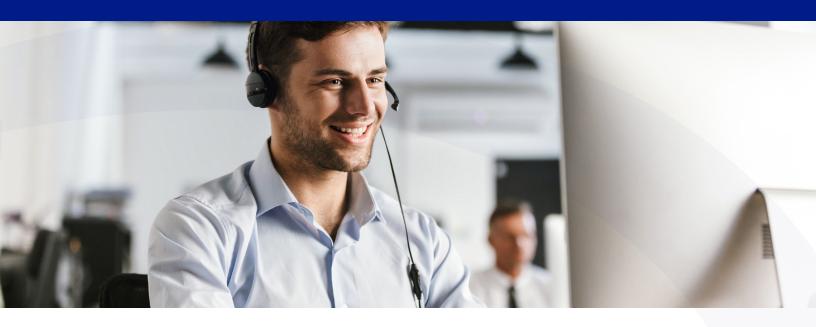
Therefore, the provider should:

- **Proactively monitor the network.** The provider should support and proactively monitor services 24/7/365 from multiple redundant network and security operations centers. Dedicated support and infrastructure should ensure that the network services perform to their maximum potential and customers receive the best technical support available.

- **Include security safeguards.** The voice system should use technology to proactively detect fraudulent use enabling the provider to intervene quickly. Passwords generated during equipment registration and configuration should be extremely strong and adhere to industry standards. These passwords should never be shared or publicized, and their use over the network should be encrypted. Administrator and user portals should also require the use of extremely strong passwords.

WHAT MAKES FUSION CONNECT DIFFERENT?

Full suite of integrated unified communications tools.

Use any of your devices as your business phone, with the added convenience of real-time collaboration and conferencing tools. Improve productivity and mobility with features like video calling, IM and Presence, and online conferencing (including desktop sharing and guest access via web browser), integrated into a single application. Works with popular operating systems and devices including Windows PCs, Mac OS X, iPhone, iPad, and Android smartphones and tablets.

#5: SERVICE, SERVICE, SERVICE

The chosen service provider should deliver more than just a high-performance, highly secure converged voice and data network.

It should also focus on meeting the service needs of companies of all sizes. It should have a customer orientation that goes beyond offering a "cookie cutter" solution to all customers.

Key service-focused criteria to look for include:

- **An enterprise-grade solution that scales.** Look for a service provider that offers solutions to consolidate voice infrastructure and access, right-size usage plans and call paths, and reduce maintenance and administration. For example:

  - Hosted VoIP that offers high-end features but is available to organizations of any size: from a single seat to thousands of seats spread across multiple locations.

  - Enterprise Trunking to reduce costs and simplify IT management by combining voice and Internet access over a single Internet connection.

  - Cloud-based hybrid voice solution to enable sharing of voice resources, including concurrent call paths and minutes bundles, across all business locations and voice technology types.

- **A service model that supports business-class voice services.** Does the service provider offer a true turnkey solution? Does the provider offer the equipment, service, and support for the entire solution— including professional installation? Does the service provider offer network-based managed security services? Does the provider offer QoS assurances?

- **Professional services, including project management.** It is highly desirable for the provider to have a national professional services organization that has strong, dedicated expertise in technical issues, service delivery, change management, and project management. A smooth deployment and ongoing support are essential, particularly for companies where internal IT resources are maxed out or nonexistent.

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- **Flexible access and feature options.** Customers should be able to choose the type of Internet access that their locations require, along with flexible feature and calling packages tailored to the needs of their individual users. As part of the VoIP service, the provider should offer the basics of unified communications such as caller ID, call transfer, and E911. Look for providers that include a large range of features in their plans and also offer additional features "a la carte". Compare carefully. Some providers charge separately or require upgrading to a more expensive package in order to obtain certain features, which can significantly add to the monthly bill.

- **Support for multiple locations and inter-office dialing.** A provider of true converged voice and data services can easily take multiple locations and treat them as one network to offer extension dialing between sites. Extension dialing reduces long distance costs by providing inter-office calls at no charge. It boosts productivity by enabling employees to place calls faster.

- **Complete service portfolio.** Look for a provider that is willing to support all your locations and that offers a range of related business services so you can manage one provider and pay one bill. Related business services may include business broadband, private networking, network and data security, and hosted IT services as well.

WHAT MAKES FUSION CONNECT DIFFERENT?

No minimums.

Unlike other providers, we don't place user or seat minimums on our 24/7 customer care availability. Fusion Connect Delivers Hosted VoIP Services Designed for Business

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FUSION CONNECT HOSTED VOICE IS THE IDEAL SOLUTION FOR BUSINESSES WITH ONE OR MULTIPLE LOCATIONS.
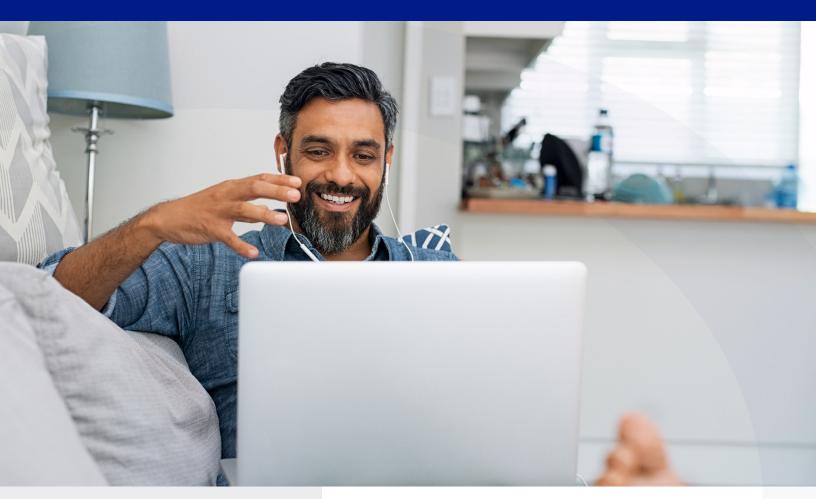
It is an enterprise-grade, cloud-based IP phone service that provides all employees with a unified phone system, with the same business features in every location. Hosted Voice is available nationwide.

Fusion Connect Hosted Voice can help companies achieve significant cost savings. With no expensive PBX equipment to lease, purchase, or maintain, Fusion Connect's hosted VoIP solution costs up to 50% less per employee than a traditional PBX or key system, and it offers more essential business features.

Fusion Connect gives companies a choice of affordable phones, features, and calling plans. Fusion Connect Hosted Voice can also work with existing telephone systems, allowing companies to migrate to IP telephony at their own pace.

FUSION CONNECT HOSTED VOICE OFFERS:

- Leading, award-winning VoIP platform with 99.999% voice platform availability, the best in the industry

- Low up-front capital expenditure and a predictable monthly expense

- Network-based Quality of Service (QoS) for clear voice service

- Advanced IP business features on every phone, in every location

- Online self-administration to simplify user and service management and individual phone management

- Flexible plans and system configurations

- Selection of popular IP phones and enterprise-grade equipment

- Full Suite of Integrated Unified Communications Tools. Use any of your devices as your business phone, with the added convenience of real-time collaboration and conferencing tools. Improve productivity and mobility with video calling, IM and Presence, and online conferencing (desktop sharing and guest access via web browser), integrated into a single application. Works with popular operating systems and devices including Windows PCs, Mac OS X, iPhone, iPad, and Android smartphones and tablets.

- Flexible Installation Options. With our self-install option, you can be up and running in about a week. Or, opt for a fully-managed installation with onsite technician.

- Free, customizable user and administrator training helps employees get the most out of Hosted Voice.

- One Provider, One Point of Contact. Serve all of your locations with the convenience of a single provider.

THE FUSION CONNECT ADVANTAGE

ENABLING THE CONNECTED ENTERPRISE
Optimize your business communications, costs, and continued collaboration from any place or device, with crystal-clear quality. Securely connect your business locations and remote workers.

LEADING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY
Fusion Connect's optimized platforms leverage leading technologies, meaning seamless integration of solutions across your virtual and fixed technology platforms.

DEDICATED SUPPORT TEAM
Our 100% U.S.-based expert tech support is available 24/7 to keep your business online and available regardless of the situation.

Visit **www.fusionconnect.com** to learn more.

Or, contact a Fusion Connect Business Consultant today at **888-301-1721**.

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