



MAKING THE SWITCH:

Your Guide to the Digital Telephone Switchover



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INTRODUCTION

Making the Switch: Your Guide to the Digital Telephone Switchover

If you still have a traditional landline in your office, 2025 is a big year. It's then that traditional analogue phone systems will be switched off forever. That means you'll need to make the switch to digital.

However, it isn't a good idea to leave it to the last minute. As the date gets closer, there's likely to be a shortage of everything from engineers to equipment. It would be much better and a good deal less stressful to sort everything out with plenty of time to spare.

Although phone lines are grabbing the headlines, you may well have other analogue products in your office too. Most lifts and burglar alarms are analogue, in which case you'll need to update them as well. Everything from car parking barriers to CCTV could be affected, depending on the tech you're using

at the moment. Perhaps you've even still got a fax machine? If it's been lurking silently in the corner of your office for years, chances are you'll need to upgrade it to one that will work with digital.

Hello Future: Why Upgrade from Analogue

There are numerous reasons to upgrade. First and foremost, analogue has had its day. Some original copper phone lines date way back to the nineteenth century. They're in desperate need of an upgrade and are getting increasingly expensive to maintain.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IS QUICKER, CLEARER AND CHEAPER. IT'S THE MODERN ALTERNATIVE. IT'S THE FUTURE.

Also, and let's be honest here, you don't have a choice. When those old copper wires are retired, anything connected to them will stop working.

Why it's time to ditch the old for VoIP

So having established that you need to switch from analogue, the next question is what you move on to. You've probably heard the word "VoIP" being bandied around. But what does it mean, and most importantly, what does it mean for you?



VoIP, which stands for Voice over Internet Protocol, is a phone service where you use the internet to make calls. There are many advantages: it's more efficient, and less expensive. It's better quality and it offers more features. Calls drop less frequently too.

The cool stuff VoIP brings to the table

You're probably already using VoIP for some work tasks, even if you might not have thought about it like that. The likes of Teams, Zoom and FaceTime already use the internet rather than a phone line. These video call systems have transformed the working environment, cutting down the need to travel and making it possible to have meetings with numerous people in different parts of the world. VoIP is fully mobile. Wherever your employees are, they can connect to your office system using your business's VoIP network. They can answer calls to your business as if they were in the office, making communication much more seamless.

With VoIP, you can record calls and meetings and forward calls to mobiles. You'll get IVR (that's the bit of the system that says press 1 for accounts, and 2 for HR), helping your customers reach the people they need to speak to easily. There are also handy features like call queuing and call transfer.

VOIP PHONES ALSO OFFERS ANALYTICS, SO YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE HOW LONG A CUSTOMER QUERY TYPICALLY TAKES TO SORT OUT, AND WHETHER YOU ARE MISSING ANY CALLS.

With VoIP, you can choose your number. If you want a London number to appeal to major clients – even if you're based in Leeds, Luton or Lancaster – it's not a problem.



What happens if I don't switch my phone system over?

If you haven't made the switch by December 2025, your landline phones will stop working. It means you won't be able to use them either to make or receive calls. Don't be that person!



WHAT'S VOIP ANYWAY?

Let's break down VoIP

Using VoIP simply means using the internet to make and receive calls rather than old analogue phone lines. All you need is a smart device with a microphone and speaker, plus a decent connection, and you're all set.



Why VoIP is the superhero of communication

There's so much to love about VoIP! It's perfect for hybrid workers who flit between home and office as VoIP numbers can be used from anywhere that has internet connection. That means fewer "I'm out of the office today, please call my mobile" voicemails for everyone.

IF YOUR BUSINESS IS GROWING, IT'S EASIER TO ADD USERS THAN BEFORE. YOU DON'T NEED THE HASSLE AND EXPENSE OF EXTRA PHONE LINES OR HARDWARE. IT'S MUCH EASIER TO SCALE-UP WITH VOIP THAN ANALOGUE.

Businesses of all sizes can benefit from extra features including high quality meeting/conference calls.

STORIES OF BUSINESSES ROCKING WITH VOIP

**FIND OUT HOW WE REVOLUTIONISED THIS SOUTH EAST-BASED
WAREHOUSE AND OPERATIONS BUSINESS'S TELEPHONE SYSTEM.**

The Problem

The client was using landline telephones with one inbound call facility. The company has seen significant growth since its launch in 2002 and so the office set up was no longer sufficient. They were unable to transfer calls within the office and as a result were having to pass handsets around. They were using an answering machine to record out of hours messages but without the ability to redirect

calls to a mobile or alternative number. They were aware that not only was the set up unprofessional, but it also demonstrated a lack of customer service as the customer could only reach them during office hours and as a result were certain that they were missing potential business opportunities.

The Solution

Having looked after their computer network for many years they have a robust and reliable internet connection, so we were able to install a comprehensive yet simple to use VoIP telephone system with handsets for each employee. Unlike a landline the calls are made over the internet, so we were able to significantly reduce call costs for the customer.

Because the telephone system is connected to the internet it further means that all the handsets are visible on the network and therefore should they experience any problems we are able to access them remotely and fix without having to make a site visit. The full installation took half a day, and they now have the ability to transfer calls, voicemail messaging on each handset, conference, hold and mute, transforming the way the office functions and they have since reported enhanced productivity as a result.





CHECKING YOUR CURRENT SETUP

What phones do you have?
And are they pals with the
new tech?

Are you VoIP-ready without even noticing? It's time to check your equipment. What do you have? Look at your phone connections. If they already use an ethernet connection, you're good to go. Does your phone use a phone jack? It's time to upgrade. A good phone is only one part of the equation, though. It's also important to have a fast and reliable internet connection.

!

Remember:

As well as phones, other equipment might be affected including payment terminals and alarms. Check whether they are already digital or if they need to be updated.



GAME PLAN: THE BEST TIME TO SWITCH

How about now?

The earlier you make the switch, the easier it will be. There's bound to be a rush next year, so it will be less of a headache if you sort it out now. There's no "use by" date on VoIP systems, so there's no advantage to waiting. You'll be able to save money, improve functionality and get ahead of the game.

If your business has a number of analogue products like a payment terminal and CCTV, it's even more important to think about it all ahead of time.

Migrating over to VoIP will be straightforward for many. However, the process and timescale will depend on a number of things including what you need, who is providing your phonelines and what equipment they use.

Top tip:

In the meantime, if you're buying anything for your business like a new alarm, check that it's digital-compatible.



MONEY TALK: IS VOIP GOING TO SAVE YOU CASH?

If you're a new business, it will cost less to set up on VoIP than to put in traditional phone lines. And if you're a growing company, it will be easier to upscale when you need to as you won't need to pay for extra lines.

For any business, once installed, the system will be cheaper to maintain as there's no hardware. With VoIP, you'll get free unlimited phone calls within the UK. Plus it's cheaper to make international calls over VoIP than a landline as calls are charged at the local rate of each location.


And look – no landline rental charges!

ASTARIS VOIP SOLUTIONS

We have a number of VoIP solutions to make your life easier and help you save cash. We can:

- Advise you on the right options for your business.
- Install and maintain a reliable internet connection.
- Supply VoIP handsets for as little as 49p each per day, giving you unlimited free UK calls and access to our 24/7 helpdesk. You can choose a rolling monthly package where you pay for the handsets or opt for a three-year deal with free handsets.
- Offer you a support package based on a fixed fee or pay-as-you-go option.



A photograph showing two white Yealink VoIP phones in the foreground, slightly out of focus. Behind them is a cardboard box with the 'Yealink' logo printed on it. The phones have a circular logo on top and three status LEDs (RELAY, DECT, POWER) on the side.

GET YOUR INTERNET READY

Make your internet a superhero

You're going to be more reliant than ever on your internet connection. If your internet is unreliable, it could cause no end of problems. It's really important that your internet bandwidth is equal to the new job in hand so if you are already near capacity, you may need to upgrade.

Don't forget that as well as using your broadband for your new phones, you'll also need it for the jobs it's already doing within your company, like internet searches on PCs. Speed is important too as you'll need a fast internet connection to ensure high quality calls.

While reviewing your broadband, it's a good time to review your cyber security as well.

Don't forget about other network equipment like modems and routers. If it's getting on a bit, it may not be up to the new task in hand so thinking about updating or replacing it.

Check it's fast enough

As well as being reliable, you're going to need your internet connection to be fast. Even if you only have a few users, having an upload speed of less than 5Mb could cause problems. The person on the other end of the line might

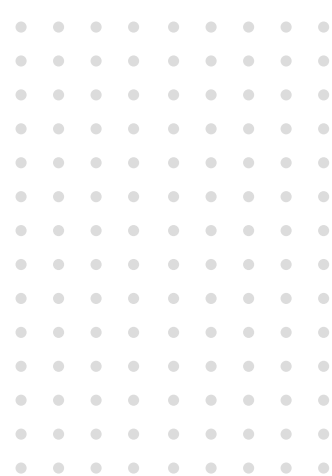
well find themselves wondering, for instance, why it sounds like they're talking to a Dalek. We recommend 5Mb as a minimum, and that once you get to three or more people, you add an extra 2Mb per user. This will ensure your system can cope with all the extra demands on your internet each individual brings.

Keep it safe from internet baddies

Internet security is crucial as there's a growing number of criminals trying to hack into business and private internet systems. There are many things you can do to deter them, from installing a secure firewall to changing the default password on VoIP phones and updating it regularly. Make sure you monitor your network at all times, including when the office is closed. You can set up an automated alert system and we are happy to advise you about this.

Supercharge security for your new phones

VoIP phones are very clever, but they have their own vulnerabilities. You can use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to protect team members using their phones remotely. A VPN will encrypt data, whether they are making or taking a call.



CHOOSE AND SET UP NEW PHONES

Get shiny new phones

We recommend Yealink handsets which come with loads of useful features that are easy to get the hang of. These include a do not disturb function, call recording and call queuing, so think about what your team needs. Also consider how many calls your people will be handling each day. The more heavily they use the phone, the more it is worth spending.

Pick phones that play nice with the new system

You need to take into account that not every VoIP phone will work with every phone system or service provider. So, if in doubt, ask!

Install and set up your new phones and make sure everything talks to each other.

On D-Day – or should that be V-Day – you'll need to plug in all your hardware like routers, then connect to the internet. You'll then need to connect your phones.

Test before you start

Test, test, test! Before “going live”, check everything is working as it should do. Is the network strong and fast enough? Is each and every phone connected? Make some external calls to people you know. Is the connection clear and clean? Are there delays between you speaking and the other person hearing it?

Did any of the calls drop? Run the tests when your office is at its busiest and there are the greatest demands on your broadband.

You may have chosen new phone numbers, or you may have decided to port over your old one. There may be some downtime when setting this up. Keep your existing service up and running until you're confident everything is in place.



Remember:

Don't forget to test everything, including other items that used to be on analogue, like CCTV.

Teach your team how to use the new phones

Don't just leave your team to figure everything out for themselves. Training them in how to use the new phones before they have to use them “for real” will improve their confidence and reduce the number of mistakes they make. It will also ensure they know how to use any new features that they haven't come across before.

It's also a good idea to leave your team with straightforward instructions on how to use some of the new functions. Many people find that having a guide they can keep by their phone and refer to offers an extra layer of reassurance.

BIG MOMENT: SWITCH TO VOIP

Pick a good time to make the switch

You can do the migration yourself or ask a service provider like us to do it for you. It should be pretty seamless but there are a number of steps that need to be taken including connecting the phones and porting your old number over, if that's what you've chosen to do.

It may seem obvious, but a good time to make the switch is not at the beginning of a busy working day. Perhaps you could ask for it to be installed towards the end of the day, after hours or at the weekend.

AFTER THE SWITCH: MAKE IT PERFECT

You'll need to monitor everything once you've made the big switch. There are diagnostic tools available to help you see if there are any problems with your network. Are you happy with the quality of the calls?



Top tip:

Ask your team what is working and what needs to be improved. Identify if they'd benefit from extra or refresher training and if there is anything else you need.



Tweak settings for the best performance

ONCE YOU'VE MOVED OVER TO VOIP, YOU NEED TO CHECK EVERYTHING IS WORKING AS IT SHOULD BE AND BE PREPARED TO MAKE A FEW TWEAKS IF YOU NEED TO.

If you do experience problems, make sure first of all that your network is happy and healthy. There's a chance you may have been unaware of problems with it before when you were just using it to browse the internet. Now your phones are connected to it, you'll be alerted to issues much more rapidly.

Once your new system is in place, you may realise you need to play around with it a bit. Your team might ask for a new feature or highlight something it's doing that's annoying them. So it's important that you can make changes to your VoIP system, and that the people looking after it for you are willing and able to do it, without landing you with a large bill.



Watch how your new phones are doing

It's a good idea to make regular test calls and check things like call quality. This should mean you can identify any minor problems early on and nip them swiftly in the bud.

Ask staff to report any problems like calls dropping, or silence from the other end. This can be caused by anything from faulty wiring to network congestion.



Celebrate the awesome stuff you gained

Take a minute to give yourself a triumphant pat on the back.

You've put in a new system that's more efficient, future-proof and cost-saving. You're ahead of the game – well done!



WHO TO CALL IF YOU NEED A TECH SUPERHERO

Here at Astaris, we can offer you support on anything and everything to do with VoIP, from advice on which phones would be best for your business to putting in a security package to protect you from cyber-attacks.

Give us a call on **01273 359133**
or contact us here:

➤ astaris.co.uk/contact



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