

Step One in Making the Move to VoIP

If you're ready to switch from your traditional PBX phone system to a more cost-effective and feature-rich IP-PBX or Hosted PBX system, your first step in the process is to determine if your network is ready.

A network that is not ready for VoIP can interfere with the quality phone and data services that VoIP promises. Inadequate networks typically cause these types of problems:

- **Packet loss** — Network congestion can cause packets to be dropped on their way to their destination and interrupt your conversations.
- **Latency** — When packets take too long to travel through the system there are delays in conversations. Any delay over 60 milliseconds is noticeable and disruptive.
- **Jitter** — Data packets arriving in a different order or at a different pace from when they were sent cause a noticeable drop in the quality of a phone call.
- **Complete connectivity disruption** — A complete disruption of the network connection naturally causes calling problems.

Before you enable VoIP service, your Ideacom member service provider can assist you in verifying whether your network has sufficient bandwidth to avoid these problems.

Most small to mid-sized businesses are VoIP-ready.

Surprisingly, most small to mid-sized business networks using high-speed Internet providers are VoIP-ready. If there are any service quality issues, most of them are easily identified and fixed before VoIP is initiated. In fact, Ideacom member service providers never want to bring a customer on to their IP-PBX or Hosted PBX system if they know the customer's network will not support VoIP or provide great service quality.

In addition to your bandwidth needs, the following are the issues that are also important to review before you make the move to a IP-PBX or Hosted PBX service:

1. **Type of Internet connection**

You'll want to test the strength and speed of your Internet connection, as it plays a significant role in setting up successful business communications for on-site and remote employees.



2. Reliability of Internet connection

Your prospective service provider can run a multi-day simulation of voice traffic from your site to determine the reliability of your connection.

3. Reliability of your ISP and its ability to support VoIP

There are minimum network requirements for a typical VoIP service. They include:

- An Internet Service Provider (ISP) that delivers your Internet service over a wired connection such as DSL, Cable, FIOS or a leased-line (T-1, T-3, etc.). Satellite or microwave connections are not reliable enough to support VoIP.
- A serviceable router
- An active DHCP-compatible (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) server
- A location in where Enhanced 911 service is available

4. Network equipment that supports VoIP

If your current equipment does not have the features and capabilities necessary for VoIP compatibility, your service provider may recommend upgrades. This would typically involve the following equipment:

- **Router** — must include a robust Bandwidth Management (BWM) system that effectively aids in preventing call and fax quality issues
- **Modem or Gateway** — must meet Router/Gateway requirements of your IP-PBX system or Hosted PBX service provider

Plan for your business to grow.

The bandwidth required now may not be the bandwidth you will need as your business grows. You should analyze how many of your employees will be accessing the VoIP system for phone and data communications today, and what you project those numbers to be over the next few years. In most businesses, employee growth means one or two at a time. You don't want to have to expand your bandwidth needs every time you hire a new employee, so it's important to make sure that the bandwidth you have can easily handle your needs in the near future.



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As your business grows and your needs change, your Ideacom service provider can repeat the same process implemented when you made your original move to a VoIP system. The process includes:

- Reconfirming bandwidth, compatible ISP and network equipment
- Optimizing network equipment for VoIP
- Verifying that the equipment will register and deliver a quality phone call

By changing your voice and data communication system to a VoIP or Hosted PBX system, you can take advantage of features and capabilities previously available only to large companies while dramatically cutting costs. It's a smart business move. Just make sure that your network is VoIP-ready before you make the switch.



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