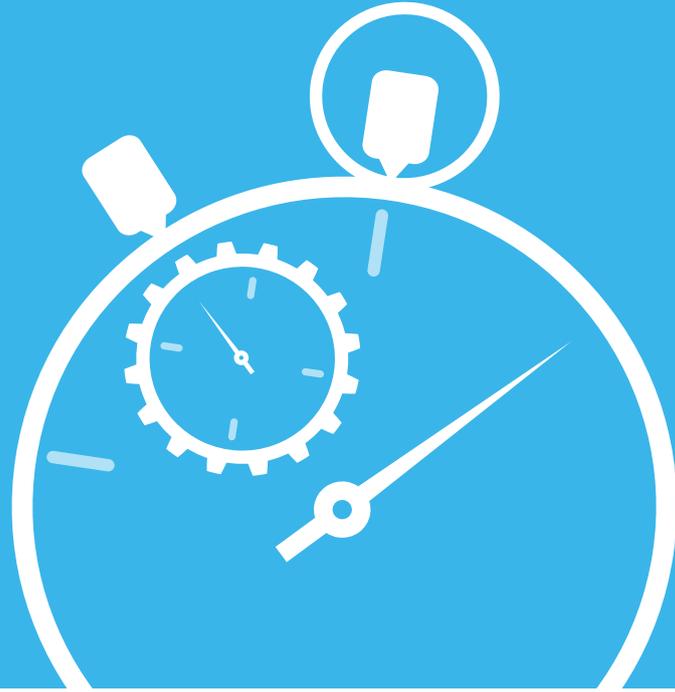




Voice Services



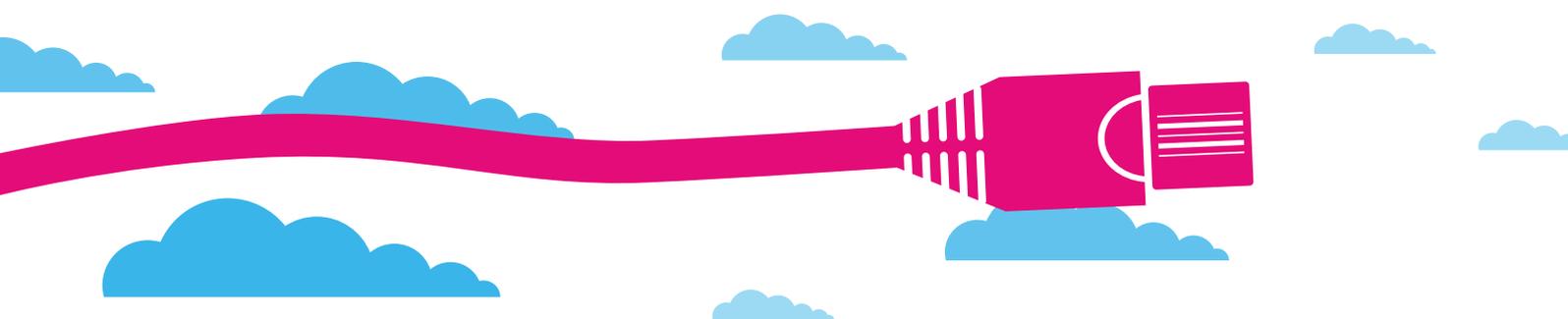
# The essential guide to cost-effective telecoms

# The essential guide to cost-effective telecoms

How cloud-based communications can save your business money, improve customer service and ensure you're prepared for an agile future.

There was a time when having an on-site PBX was your only option. Businesses tended to be self-contained entities with employees essentially office-bound. However, this approach is no longer relevant in today's more flexible working environment. More and more businesses are starting to adopt flexible working hours, mobile working and hot-desking. Many businesses now have more than one office and are feeling constant pressure to control costs and improve productivity.

Today's businesses need to be agile and this means having the infrastructure in place to support a flexible and responsive environment. With this in mind, many companies are moving to a hosted PBX solution.



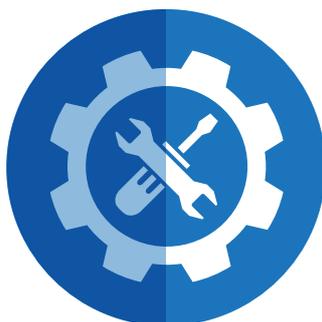
By moving your PBX to the cloud, you can access some great benefits including lower call costs (often with local UK calls free of charge) as well as increased flexibility. The shift in companies moving to a hosted PBX solution is being fuelled by the growing realisation that today's business environment requires an alternative form of infrastructure to support it.

## On-site PBX - is it really best for your business?

Businesses are having to adapt to satisfy employees' working requirements. Recent changes in regulations, increased mobility and changes to the standard 9-5 working day are placing more pressure on businesses to conform. The question is: does your existing phone system give your business the ability to exploit these new horizons? An on-premise PBX requires:



High up-front costs



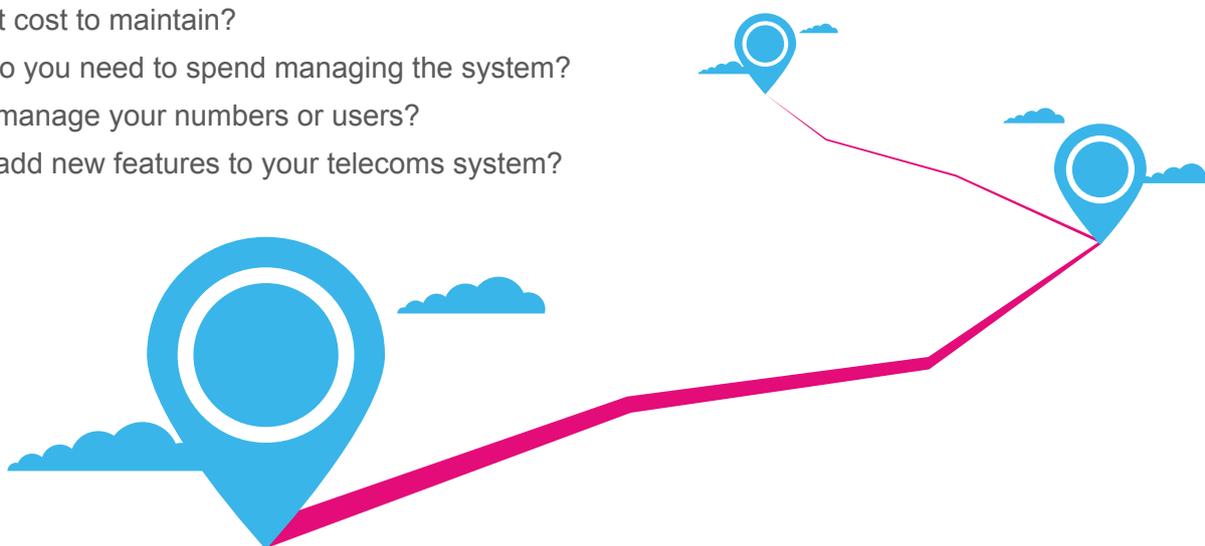
The need for internal management and maintenance



In-house expertise to solve issues when they arise

If your organisation has more than one site, these factors will be multiplied adding additional costs to your business. If you're currently using or planning a future purchase of an on-site PBX, there are other issues to consider:

- How flexible it is - can employees be easily reached in and out of the office?
- Can you make free calls between sites?
- Does it have business continuity built in?
- Do you have to pay for features like call forwarding?
- How much does it cost to maintain?
- How much time do you need to spend managing the system?
- How easy is it to manage your numbers or users?
- How easy is it to add new features to your telecoms system?



## Why businesses are moving to the cloud

Organisations of all sizes are moving all or part of their IT infrastructure and business communications to the cloud. The reasons are simple. Cloud-based services can help organisations to:



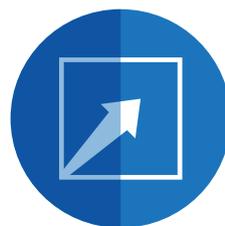
Reduce costs  
such as hardware,  
staffing and  
energy



Save time on  
management and  
maintenance



Improve flexibility  
so that they're  
better positioned  
to respond to  
urgent changes



Improve scalability,  
enabling users to  
respond quickly  
to new business  
needs



Gain resilience,  
enhancing  
business continuity

Many organisations around the world are now running business-critical applications and services in the cloud. This is because cloud-based services have proven to be robust, reliable and resilient.

## Why telecoms is moving to the cloud

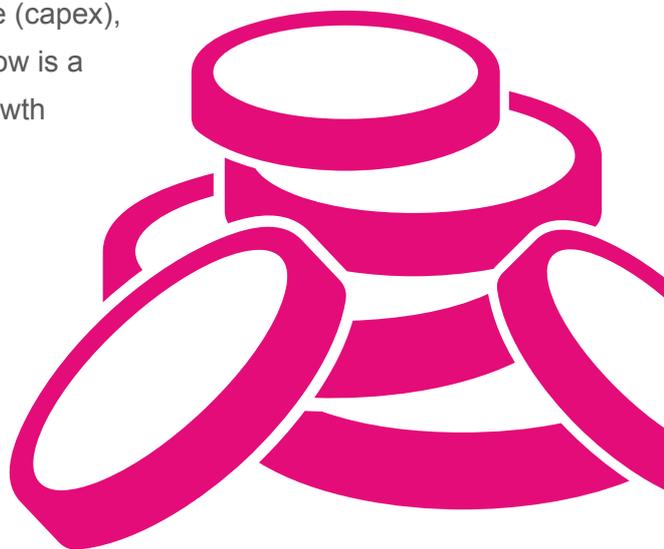
Even traditional telecoms providers have seen the writing on the wall - the future for telephony is in the cloud. Telecoms businesses are now aligning their growth strategies with the cloud and investing heavily in this sector.

In the past, some businesses were reluctant to consider a cloud-based telephony service because of concerns over security, reliability and call quality. There was a time when these concerns were not fully addressed and many considered it not appropriate for business use, but this is no longer the case. Cloud-based telephony is now a well-established technology that can offer the reliability and quality-of-service demanded by businesses of all sizes.

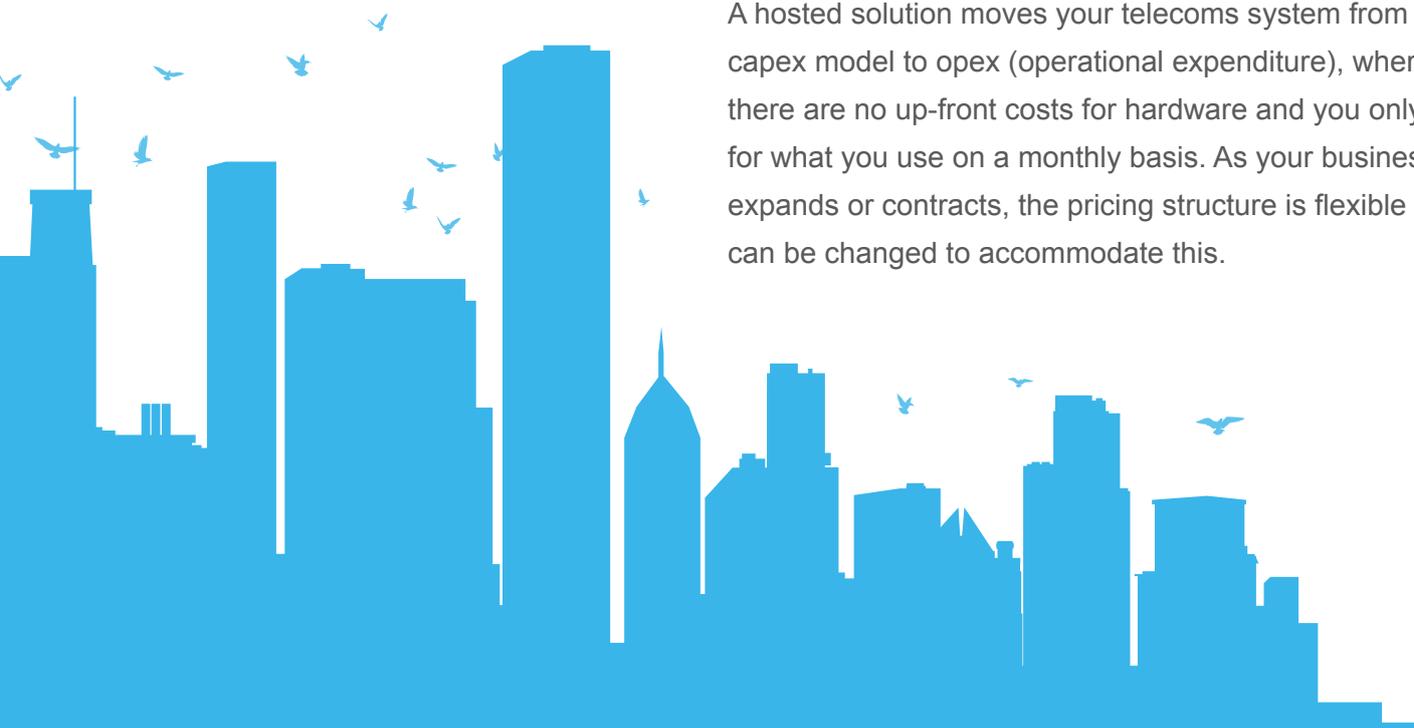
## From capex to opex

Cost is critical. It goes without saying that cost control is vital for all organisations, whether you are a start-up, SME or major corporation. Telecoms systems have traditionally been a capital expenditure (capex), with payment made upfront for equipment. If managing cash-flow is a challenge or your business is simply on the first rung of the growth ladder, finding a large upfront sum can be difficult.

Even where revenues are not an issue, purchasing your own telecoms system means you are having to invest now in a system that will support your business plans for the future. However, the future can often turn out differently to what is planned. Will the telecoms system you buy today be fit for tomorrow's business environment? Will it offer you the flexibility and scalability you need? How future-proof is it? How much will it cost in time and money to maintain and how predictable are these costs? Some of these questions are not always easy to answer, even with the most sophisticated modelling, forecasting and analysis tools at your disposal.



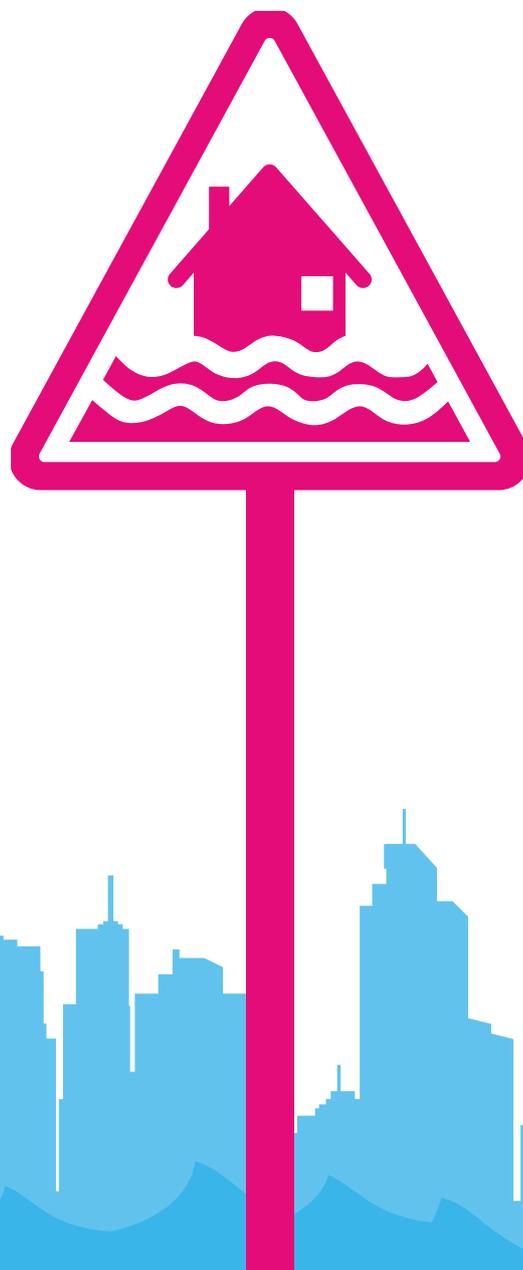
A hosted solution moves your telecoms system from a capex model to opex (operational expenditure), where there are no up-front costs for hardware and you only pay for what you use on a monthly basis. As your business expands or contracts, the pricing structure is flexible and can be changed to accommodate this.



## Why opt for a hosted telecoms service?

One of the biggest myths about using a hosted telecoms service is that your business loses control. When a PBX is located on-premise, it's easy to feel that you have complete control but is that really the case? What if a disaster strikes your site - a flood or power cut, for example? What if you want to expand your telecoms service quickly - does your existing system allow you to do this or are you at the mercy of its limited functionality and scalability?

Opting for a hosted service doesn't mean losing control over how your telecoms system operates. You can decide the services you require, the call management features you want and the number of lines you need. Changes can be made via a simple-to-use web interface - there's no need to contact your telecoms provider when wanting alterations made.



## How a hosted telecoms system can help your business

A hosted telecoms system uses VoIP technology. This offers many benefits over ISDN, such as greater flexibility, scalability and lower call costs. It also allows your business to be more flexible. It can take months to put in new ISDN lines whereas a cloud-based system can achieve this almost instantly and at a much lower cost.

### Opting for a hosted system means:

- No upfront hardware costs
- You only pay for the number of users you need
- You can keep your existing numbers or choose new ones
- There's no need to manage, maintain or upgrade a PBX
- You're able to select from a wide range of call management and call handling features
- You can respond quickly to changes in your business. Opening up a new site? Allowing more employees to work from home? Increasing the number of mobile workers in your organisation? All of these changes can be handled quickly with a hosted service
- You can integrate mobile and fixed line services. Some providers even include free calls between fixed and mobile devices
- Employees can be reached on the same number wherever they are
- You can take advantage of lower call costs. In fact, some providers will include free internal and site-to-site calls
- Scalability is not an issue - as your business expands, your telecoms service grows with it.
- Your business is more resilient - a hosted service will include built-in business continuity. If there is a disaster at a site, you can continue to function with limited disruption, reducing the risk of lost business opportunities and enabling you to remain in touch with your customers



## Choosing a hosted telephony provider

Making the decision to move your telecoms to the cloud can be a daunting prospect for business owners. It pays to ensure that the provider you choose can deliver what you need.

- Have a strong existing customer base and proven track record of similar cases
- Have a dedicated network for greater reliability
- Provide outstanding customer service
- Offer robust SLAs for security, reliability and QoS
- Offer a wide range of products, features and services
- Provide a flexible pricing model
- Allow you to customise and personalise your telephony to meet your business' needs
- Teach you how to easily access new features
- Provide training and support if required

The benefits offered by a hosted telecoms system can be enormous: huge cost savings, a more agile business and greater flexibility. That's why more and more organisations are deciding that a cloud-based

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