ELEVATE UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

Cloud vs. On-Premise Phone System

How do systems scale?	
On-premises phone system	**Cloud phone system**
Requires a server called a private-branch exchange (or PBX). Some are scalable (you can add more capacity) and others simply will not scale beyond a certain number of users. In some situations, you have to purchase phone lines in modules, e.g., you buy capacity for 12 users when you only need 9 lines.	Scales with your business, so you are never paying for users you don't need. You purchase service for the exact number of users you have. Adding a new employee is as simple as ordering service and plugging in another phone.
Which is more reliable?	
Shuts down when the power goes out or the phone lines are disrupted—your customers get a busy signal. Not very reliable. They're also subject to whatever disaster strikes your office location, e.g., fire, flooding, severe weather, or theft can render your phones unusable or offline.	Runs on your provider's network, which should have multi-region datacenters and built-in redundancy that ensures an outage in one server or datacenter doesn't bring the whole system down. Electricity or internet outages may impact your office's phones, but not the service itself, which in the event of an outage would reroute calls to your desktop or mobile app. In that regard, they are highly reliable.
How hard is it to set up and train users?	
Usually requires a specialized technician to install, set up, maintain, and make changes. And you'll have to schedule the service, which can take weeks. Employees may be given a phone system "cheat sheet" that tells them how to transfer calls, conference someone in, and so on.	Its easy to implement and usually doesn't even require a visit from your vendor. Every phone is shipped to you with simple instructions for how to plug them into your existing internet connection. Support agents or your IT partner can talk you through how to use the online dashboard to configure phone numbers, assign call forwarding, and more. The process takes just hours, not weeks.

How is the service priced?	
On-premises phone system	**Cloud phone system**
Usually requires annual contracts and additional charges for feature changes, moving or adding lines, maintenance, and more. Plus, you have to pay the phone company for phone lines and long distance.	Is priced on a flat monthly fee per user and generally includes local and long-distance calling. Business features like voicemail, call forwarding, conferencing, video, and other communication features are all included in the cost.

What's the biggest business benefit to cloud communications?

"Biggest" depends on what matters to you. But cloud communications in general are more affordable, more reliable, and easier to set up than on-premises phones. They also scale with your business more flexibly and deliver communication and collaboration features that your customers and employees are used to having on their mobile devices. Last, they are usually integrated with a mobile app that gives your employees the ability to make and receive business calls from their mobile device, so connecting with customers or other employees isn't dependent on employees sitting at a desk all day.

What happens to my existing business phone numbers if I switch? And what about 800 numbers?

You keep your existing phone numbers when you switch to the cloud. Moving phone numbers is called "porting." Porting local phone numbers takes about 2-4 weeks depending on how quickly your current service provider responds, and porting toll-free numbers typically takes about 1-2 weeks. There is usually a bit of overlap time where your phone numbers are active on both services.

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