

Is a Cloud-based Phone System Right for My Business?



Cloud; It's a buzz word in business, but what is it? Clearly, when your business uses cloud-based services, there won't be a fluffy cumulus floating above you. Don't worry. Most people don't start out understanding the ever-changing technical jargon. That shouldn't keep you from an opportunity to improve the productivity of your business while cutting costs by leveraging the cloud. Instead of making you ask the questions, we have gathered the top 10 questions we get at RingCentral about using cloud-based phone systems with helpful answers to put you at ease. And remember, we are always here to help.

1. What exactly are cloud-based phone systems?

Cloud or hosted services are not new. Businesses have been using cloud-based solutions like Salesforce CRM or Webex virtual conferencing for years. Cloud-based phone systems leverage the power of cloud hosting and technology innovation to bring businesses of any size a complete enterprise phone system – with all the bells and whistles – at a fraction of the cost of traditional phone systems.

2. How is it different from my existing service?

If you are like the majority of businesses out there, you either have basic phone service through your local carrier and a traditional hardware-based PBX. And, most likely, you have a tiny room somewhere in the back of your office filled with wires that some IT expert needs to manipulate every time you hire a new employee or make a change. With the cloud, all of this hassle goes away. No more PBX hardware or dark, scary, wire-filled phone rooms. With a cloud-based solution, you can configure your phone system— add new lines, change your answering services or record a message played for all callers – all from an easy-to-use web interface or your smartphone. Every change you make, from setup to adding new offices located anywhere, are instant and as simple as clicking your mouse and buying a book on Amazon.com.

3. What are the benefits of a cloud-based system?

Cloud phone systems provide 4 primary benefits to businesses:

1. **Rich functionality:** Cloud phone systems bring you all the functionality of traditional enterprise phone systems and a whole lot more like fax in your inbox, advanced call routing, ability to make all changes instantly, and much more.
2. **Cost savings:** With no hardware to buy upfront, no maintenance costs, and monthly charges are all inclusive, cloud-based systems are less expensive than traditional solutions. For a 10-20 person business, you save approximately \$20,000 upfront on the cost of a traditional PBX, and thousands more annually because of no maintenance and lower monthly bills.
3. **Ease of setup and use:** A cloud phone system takes just minutes to set up and all changes go live instantly.
4. **Scalability and flexibility:** Cloud phone systems are extremely flexible and customizable to meet the needs of your business – so you can have your phone system exactly the way that you need it. And as your business grows, adding new users and locations is as easy as clicking a button.

4. Do I get to keep my phone number?

Yes. When you move to a cloud-based phone system you can transfer your existing numbers from your old system. This is often called LNP, or local number portability. That means there is no need to update all your business cards or ask your customers to learn a new phone number. Just be wary of services that charge too much to transfer each number.

5. Do I need special equipment?

No, you do not need any special phone system hardware to use a cloud phone system. It is recommended that you get IP phones that are fully-supported by cloud services. With these phones, getting started is as simple as “plug-and-ring.” So if you get the bug to feng shui your office, don’t worry. Move your desk, plug in your phone and it will work with the right numbers.

6. How reliable is the cloud?

Cloud solutions are extremely reliable and offer redundancy that is not available with non-cloud solutions. For example, if you experience a snow storm, a hurricane, or an earthquake, and your office is damaged because of flooding or just shut down due to snow, your cloud based phone system will not be impacted since it is not located in your physical office location and cannot be damaged. You can simply log in from anywhere and reroute your customer’s calls to employees working anywhere.

7. But what if my internet goes down?

With most cloud providers, even if your home or office internet goes down, you can use your smartphone to access your system and re-route calls. Basically you carry your backup plan—your trusty cell phone—in your purse or pocket.

8. Can it meet the changing needs of my business?

Yes, that is the beauty of cloud-based solutions. They can grow and contract based on the needs of your business. Are you adding new employees? No problem. Do you need to add a new office? No problem, you add an office with the click of your finger and you never have to buy another PBX hardware box which costs tens of thousands of dollars for the new office. Changing your business hours to take advantage of a busy season? That’s OK, it’s easy to update. Your service can change as your business changes, without the risk of losing investments made in PBX hardware or long-term contracts.

9. Will it become obsolete when the next big tech thing comes along?

No. This is the power of cloud-based technology. Not only are cloud companies the leaders in technology innovation, but they never have to manage multiple versions of a product and all technology changes go live instantly to all customers using the cloud service. For customers, this means that they automatically experience the most advanced and current version of cloud technology without having to do anything. And cloud services benefit from seamless feature updates because there is no hardware or software to upgrade. You’ll get the latest features as they become available.

10. Who is using cloud-based phone systems to support their business?

Who isn’t? Small to large businesses are reaping the benefits of cloud phone systems. A one-person IT consulting business can be on-the-go but accessible to his customers thanks to the cloud. A real estate office can easily add a line when a new agent comes on board and create an auto attendant to direct calls virtually. Franchisors are also turning to cloud-based phone systems as part of the preferred business package sold to franchisees. So whether you are a 4-person business or a 400-person business spread across many offices, cloud phone systems are right for you.

Ready to give cloud a try?

One possible solution is RingCentral, an easy-to-use, flexible business phone system designed for small and medium businesses that works the way you do. RingCentral offers a complete phone and fax solution with big business features and mobility for a small business price. Business class Polycom and Cisco desk and conference phones arrive *Plug & Ring* ready, and you get implementation advisors and free 24x7 support. For more information, please contact a sales representative, visit <http://www.ringcentral.com> or call 855-774-2508.