



6 Ways Cloud Communications Change the Game for Small Business



Real Savings for Small Business

Legacy technology, such as outdated phone systems, is one of the biggest drains on a company's financial resources—one that small businesses can't afford. Thirty percent of small businesses fail in their first two years, according to the Small Business Administration. The most widely cited reason for closing is mismanaged cash.

Moving to a cloud communications platform won't remove all the challenges small businesses face, but it will lower phone system costs while giving small businesses access to cutting edge innovations. Traditional phone systems are innovation resistant and lose value over time. Maintenance and upgrade costs sap companies of time and money. Importantly, they don't allow small businesses to provide the type of experience modern customers expect.

Savvy small businesses are waking up to legacy technology's limitations and migrating to cloud communications platforms. They are doing so through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or virtual Private Branch Exchange (PBX) solutions.

Cloud-based communications providers typically offer robust solutions that give businesses one system of engagement featuring voice, video and chat that facilitates better collaboration among employees and better experiences for customers—at a lower cost than legacy phone systems.



Get More with Cloud Communications

Despite the clear benefits, there is still some lingering resistance to adopting cloud communications technology. Businesses are often reluctant to change their current systems for something that feels new—especially with something as business-crucial as communications. In fact, VoIP telephone service was first introduced in the 1990s. It has since become a mass-market phenomenon adopted across industries and by businesses of all sizes.

Advances in network technology now enable service providers to offer highly reliable cloud communications solutions, with call quality that often surpasses the quality of landline calls.

Here are six key ways your small business can benefit when you migrate to a cloud communications platform.

1. Boost productivity with advanced phone features

Traditional phone systems tend to leave small businesses with a limited set of basic

features, like voicemail and call forwarding. State-of-the-art capabilities—such as extension dialing, auto attendants, mobile apps and corporate directories—were reserved for large corporations that had the resources and IT support to install, maintain and upgrade the systems that enabled these features.

Today, the proliferation of cloud communications technology has made these and other modern phone features affordable for even very small businesses. These features are more than just a convenience; they dramatically improve the employee experience, increasing productivity and efficiency by helping team members quickly connect with customers and easily share information with each other.

Moving to one system of engagement delivered on a single cloud communications platform gives businesses a double boost: Rich new capabilities help you do more business, and the money you save can be invested elsewhere to fuel even more growth.

2. Bring telephone and conferencing services under one roof

Many small businesses use audio conference bridges and web conferencing services to connect with customers and partners. These services help companies communicate with parties around the globe, but they can add hundreds of dollars to your monthly communications costs. And few of these services integrate with one another, leaving small businesses with multiple disparate systems to manage and maintain.

Some cloud communications solutions let you consolidate your telephone and conferencing services and pay just one affordable monthly fee to your service provider. For example, 8x8 offers audio, web and video conferencing capabilities. You can quickly connect over voice, share your screen during a live web meeting and hold a face-to-face video conference, all within a single application. There's no need to purchase separate WebEx, GoToMeeting or conference bridge services. Not only does this save money, it also provides a better user experience for your employees, your partners and your customers.

3. Erase legacy phone system maintenance and upgrade costs

Companies are most often required to store legacy phone equipment onsite. That means it's up to you to administer the system, either with your own IT staff or by hiring outside consultants, which can be very expensive.

When you switch to a cloud-based solution, you no longer have to worry about maintaining and upgrading antiquated equipment. Instead, you pay a predictable monthly bill, shifting your communications system from a capital expense to an operating expense. When it's time to upgrade to the latest software, your service provider automatically pushes out the update as part of your monthly service fee.

Without on-premise equipment to manage, you can reduce or eliminate outside consultant fees. Plus, your IT staff can focus on supporting business initiatives rather than keeping your outdated phone system running.

4. Enjoy greater flexibility

Legacy phone systems burden your business in another way: they are difficult to expand or change. When the time comes to add new lines or otherwise alter your setup, you must pay your service provider additional fees, dedicate your IT staff to the project, and possibly hire outside consultants to help with the transition.

You might try to avoid this situation by purchasing additional storage at the outset, but then you are paying for something you may never use.

Not so with cloud communications solutions, which are, of course, hosted in the cloud. This allows for easy expansion and alterations that you can do yourself or with a quick call to your service provider. Some providers let you add lines by simply logging in to your own account and placing the order. If you need to move an employee, it's as simple as unplugging his or her phone and plugging it back in at the new location.

Web-based system management also makes it easy to set up and modify your system's features—all without purchasing a service contract or hiring an IT consultant to help you.

5. Grow your mobile workforce

Today's always-on customers expect to connect with businesses instantly. If they can't, they can easily take their business elsewhere. To keep up, many small businesses are going mobile, adopting bring your own device (BYOD) policies and allowing employees to work from anywhere, whether in the office, on the road or at home. This way, team members can stay in touch with customers and partners wherever they are located.

Employee experience benefits when a business goes mobile, too. They have the flexibility to work from whichever device they prefer. With cloud communications solutions like 8x8, workers' mobile phones can ring when they receive a call on their desk phones, ensuring they never miss a call. Team members can hold video conferences through a mobile app, so they aren't tied down to their desktop computer.

Traditional phone systems can't compete when it comes to mobility. In addition to supporting calls across devices, many cloud communications services offer mobile apps and web and video conferencing capabilities on cell phones, tablets and laptops. This way, employees can do business anytime, anywhere.

6. Lower your monthly phone bill

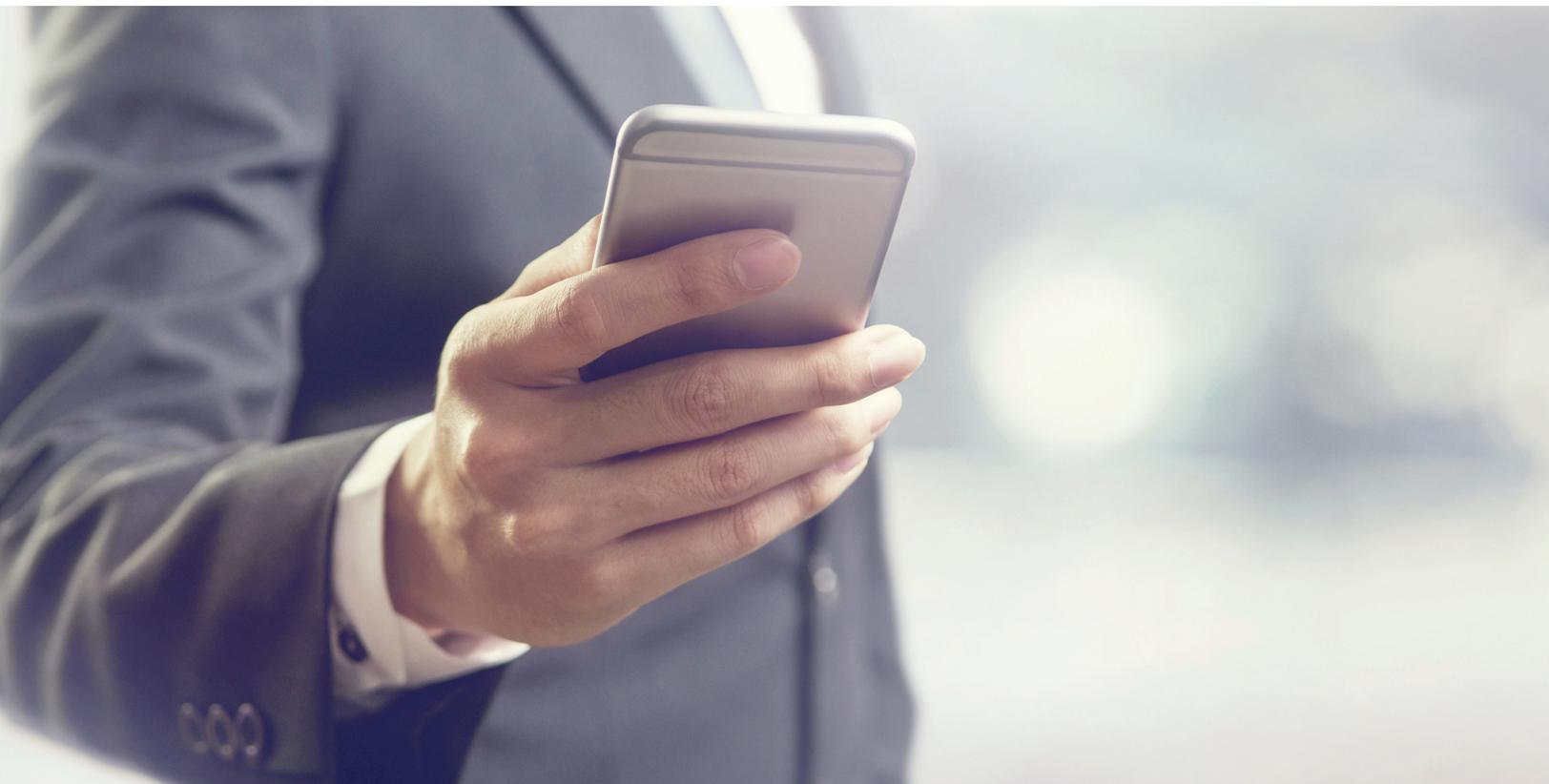
Businesses today have a distributed workforce, distributed customer base, or both. This usually means separate phone systems for each location. Not only do toll, long distance and international calls quickly add up, but there is also the

complexity of managing multiple bills and service contracts with various local and long distance providers.

By migrating to a cloud solution, you substantially reduce all of those costs—and streamline your service contracts in the process. Because your service is hosted in the cloud, you can unify all of your locations and workers under the same phone system, bringing everyone onto one system of engagement.

In addition, cloud communications offers local, long distance and international call rates that are typically much lower than what you would pay with traditional phone service.

In today's business landscape, cell phones are commonly used to make business calls. This can become prohibitively expensive, especially when making or taking long distance and international calls. Cloud communications reduces your cell phone charges by allowing you to use your smartphone as an extension of your office phone. Instead of paying high cellular rates, you'll pay low, cloud-based rates—even when using your mobile phone overseas.





The Smarte Way to Communicate

Here's the bottom line: if you stick with a traditional phone system, you'll continue to pay a lot of money for a limited set of features. That's why tens of thousands of small businesses have already made the switch to cloud communications.

These businesses understand that, to stay solvent, they need to adopt the latest communications technologies. And now, thanks to affordable cloud communications solutions like 8x8, doing so is feasible for many more small businesses.

Ready for the Next Step?

To learn more about how your business can leverage cloud communications to lower costs, increase collaboration and engage customers, contact an 8x8 Solutions Expert at [1.866.879.8647](tel:1.866.879.8647) or visit 8x8.com.

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