

# **Guide to Telecommunication Systems for Businesses**

**Learn everything from phone lines,  
cloud-based & IP telephony systems,  
connecting with remote workers,  
collaboration & more**

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Are you looking for a new  
**telecoms solution** for  
your business? Or do you  
just need some **advice?**

## INTRODUCTION

Years ago, businesses conversed mostly using the desktop telephone situated on employees' desks. Some members of staff had mobile phones, though call charge costs deterred any frivolous usage and email was an emerging technology not used as predominately as it is today, even fax was more popular!

Today, things have changed drastically. Now there are lots of different ways that businesses are communicating; phone, mobile phone, email, text (SMS), Skype, video not forgetting social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Some businesses such as; Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Petrochemical & Hospitality will even use other platforms such as Radio, VoWiFi, IP-DECT and Private Mobile Networks to keep teams in contact with each other.

As you can see the way in which businesses communicate has changed, there are far more platforms and channels that employees choose to adopt to reach out, share information or talk to each other on.

The desktop phone is no longer the main channel that business is conducted on, however, it is still significant and very much plays an important part in a business overall communication strategy. What's important to understand is; what part does it play when there are so many other ways employees choose to use to communicate with each other?

This guide explains how businesses can use the latest telephony solutions to help manage enquires, streamline old technology hardware and unify communication channels to protect business.



## MANAGING ENQUIRES ACROSS ALL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Dealing with general sales, service or accounting enquires quickly and efficiently helps to increase sales and improve customer service, which leads to better customer satisfaction and more repeat business. However, managing this process is challenging (regardless of business size) and the task becomes far more complex the more channels there are to oversee.

Employing too many staff for the number of enquires means staff are left idle, bored & unproductive which doesn't help staff morale – let alone profit margins. Similarly, having too many enquiries can leave teams overstretched, over worked, stressed and struggling to deliver good work. Getting the right balance is tough as identifying when you have too many enquires or too few isn't always straight forward to monitor just by observing daily activity of staff.

Plus, there are other issues of ensuring the right enquires reach the right member of staff. You don't want high value enquires being handled by your least experienced team members, whilst your best performers are handling simple, routine queries that could have been found on a website or voice portal.

There could also be times during the day that are more busy than other times, where there could be a rush of activity that lasts an hour or two before dying down. And not all enquiries come in by phone as businesses can also receive enquiries by email and online via a website.

Whereas before, a company could simply monitor incoming call activity to understand whether

teams were big enough to cope with demand – now this doesn't provide an accurate portrayal of the situation. For instance, a call logger could be deployed to measure the number of calls missed due to not answered, engaged etc but it wouldn't report on the number of emails that were received and replied to. Just by monitoring incoming call activity may indicate that the team are less busy, however, the opposite might be true and that the team is busier, however, dealing with enquiries across a channel that isn't monitored.

## Contact Centre Software

Many companies are put off by the term Contact Centre Solutions, as many people don't associate their business as a Contact Centre Environment. However, the fact is that contact centre software these days isn't just for large corporate businesses but suitable for all businesses that have a desire to manage their enquires better. The fact that the cost for these solutions have considerably reduced has significantly played a large part of their adoption by Small to Medium Sized Businesses in recent years.

## Distributing Media Enquiries



As you see from the diagram above enquires are distributed to a team member regardless of the channel the enquiry is delivered on. Calls, emails and Webchat sessions are delivered from a media queue to the next available Agent. As calls and Webchat sessions are more time sensitive than emails, these can be prioritised if desired. Therefore, a call holding in the queue behind an email can be forwarded to an agent first, as people generally accept waiting longer for emails to be replied to. Callers held in the queue can hear announcement messages e.g. listen to promotions, register for a call back or directed to the website to pick up the information that they were after.

By integrating the CRM system to a Contact Centre will enable more intelligent routing of calls. By automatically cross referencing the CLI number of the incoming call against the CRM, will identify a key account and direct those calls to the best members of the team or prioritise the caller in the call queue. Or for instance you may wish customers that call in for the second or 3rd time to be handled by the same member of the team, just so the customer doesn't have to spend time repeating the events of the previous calls.

## Monitoring

Key to the solution is being able to monitor and analyse what the situation is. This can be achieved in real time by having an overview of what is happening in the 'media queue' and by analysing historical reports and measuring all activity over a period of time.

Real time monitoring will provide an overview such as the number of customers waiting in the media queue. All members of the team can see the queue and can adopt different approaches to their current call or activity depending on the number waiting. Managers monitoring, can also ask other colleagues in the business to answer calls (even if it is to register a call back) to clear the call queue.

Contact centre software has thousands of different counters which can be used to produce different reports across the different media platforms; voice, email and webchat. By producing and analysing historical reports, it is possible to identify trends and develop strategies to overcome issues. For instance, you may see that peak times for enquires or certain trends by key members of the team that others can learn from.



## MANAGING A GROWING MOBILE WORKFORCE

Mobile technology has enabled staff on the move to receive up to date information, which leads to better and faster decision making. With Smartphone technology, 4G data networks and tablets, employees can literally work from where and still be effective and productive.

With virtually everyone working with access to a mobile phone (company, personal or both) it could be questionable what purpose does the office phone still provide today. Many employees have business contacts stored in their phone and find it easier to call customers with it regardless of whether they're in the office or not. Customers also have the small dilemma of which number to contact suppliers on; mobile or desktop phone and given both options most opt for the mobile.

However, just because you provide sales and other staff members with mobile phones - do companies really want their customers engaging with their staff entirely outside of the communication network? We all know that when sales people leave they can take their clients with them – but surely businesses don't want to make it easy for them to do it. However, allowing all communication to take place on a mobile is almost giving the sales person total access to the client. Customers are no longer calling the business they're calling a member of staff. Isn't this worrying? The question is, however, what can be done about it even if you wanted to?

The good news, something can. Business just need to adopt a unified communication approach and adopt a single number policy. In doing this all members of staff are provided with "one number" and the call simply rings through on the device/handset that employees are log into.

For instance, if they're in the office the desktop phone rings, at home then the home office phone rings and on their mobile then their mobile rings via an app (as a SIP client off the IP PBX or Cloud Based Software). Furthermore, "unanswered calls" can be forwarded to another sales employee to answer, so the customer doesn't go elsewhere and call a competitor.

### **One Number for all 3 Handsets**



**Home**

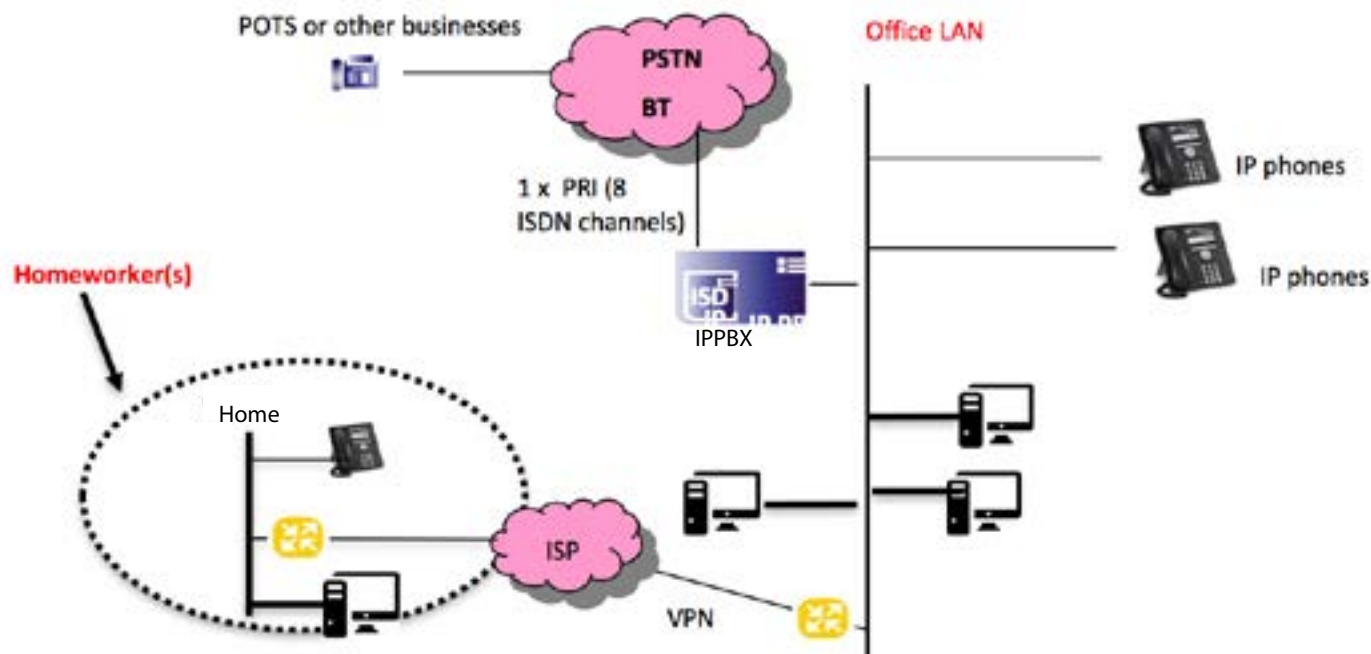
**On the Road**

**Office**

All the routing of the call is managed by the IP PBX (or Cloud Based Service Provider) and therefore, the business has much greater control and can ensure all communication activity is directed through the business. As you can see from the image of the devices above, customers only have one number to call simplifying and overcoming the multiple call number issue and any unanswered calls can be redirected to another colleague.

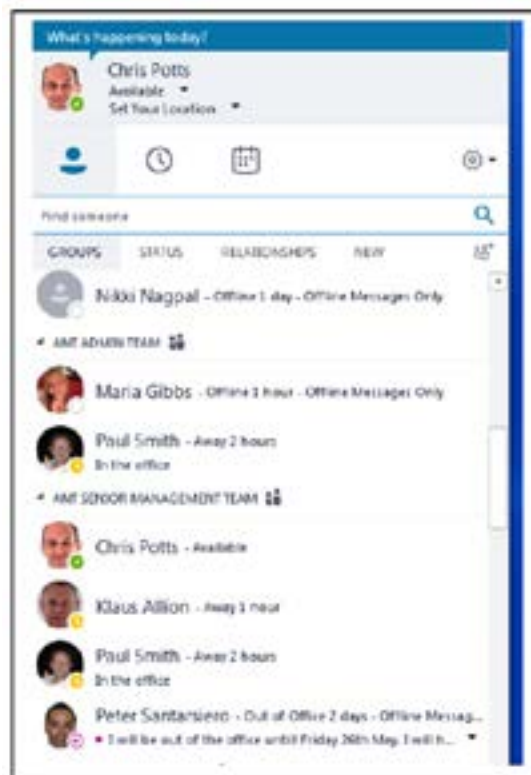
# Homeworking

Today, companies no longer need to be restricted to finding business within a drivable distance to the office. With a mobile workforce empowered and capable of working anywhere, companies have less need to employ local staff and can opt to employ staff in different parts of the country and set them up working from home. To save costs, businesses don't even need to set up a second office especially, if they want to experiment to see how quickly staff can find new customers. Though "homeworking" isn't a particularly new phenomenon, with IP technology and the availability of faster broadband speeds employees working from home no longer need to feel cut off from the office.

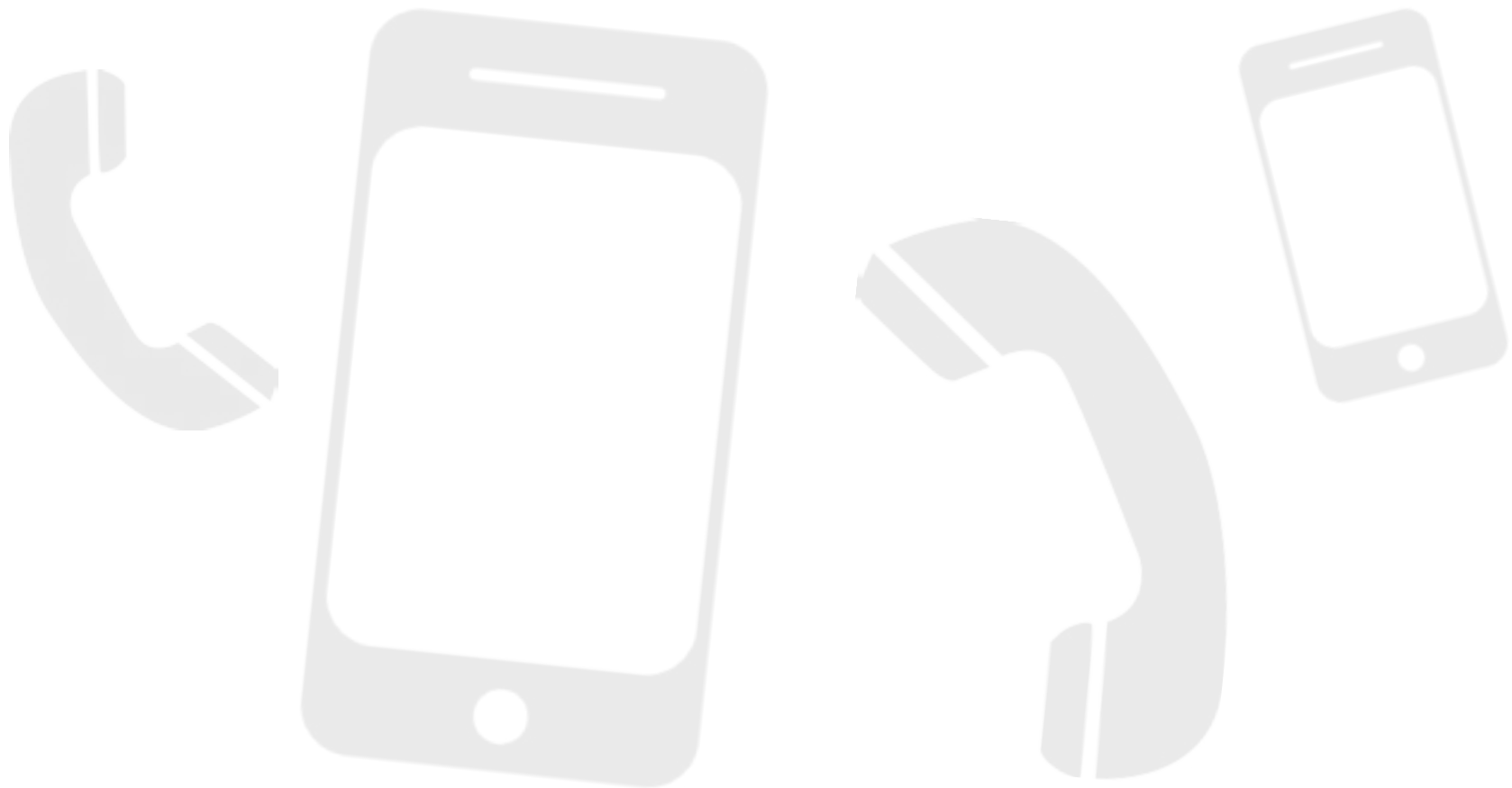


Now that broadband speeds are faster, staff can simply login to their IP Phone at home and make and receive calls as if they were in the office as indicated in the diagram above.

Furthermore, with presence software it's possible to see who is available to take a call and who isn't making it far easier to collaborate and get an answer from one of your mobile team than having to call each one in turn. Better collaboration speeds up response times and increases efficiency. Below is an image of a presence application, indicating the availability status of staff members.



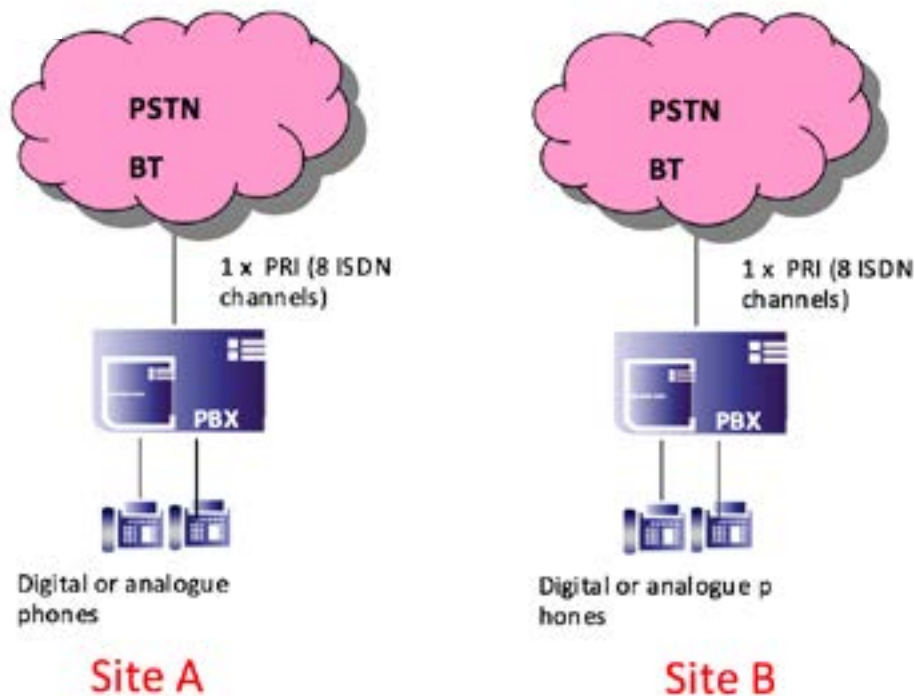
Extending a more flexible working policy to all employees can help staff juggle other commitments such as family life more easily. Also, provides a built in business continuity plan as it means anyone unable to travel to work due to adverse weather conditions or train strikes, for instance, can still work from home, thus helping to protect business productivity when such events occur.



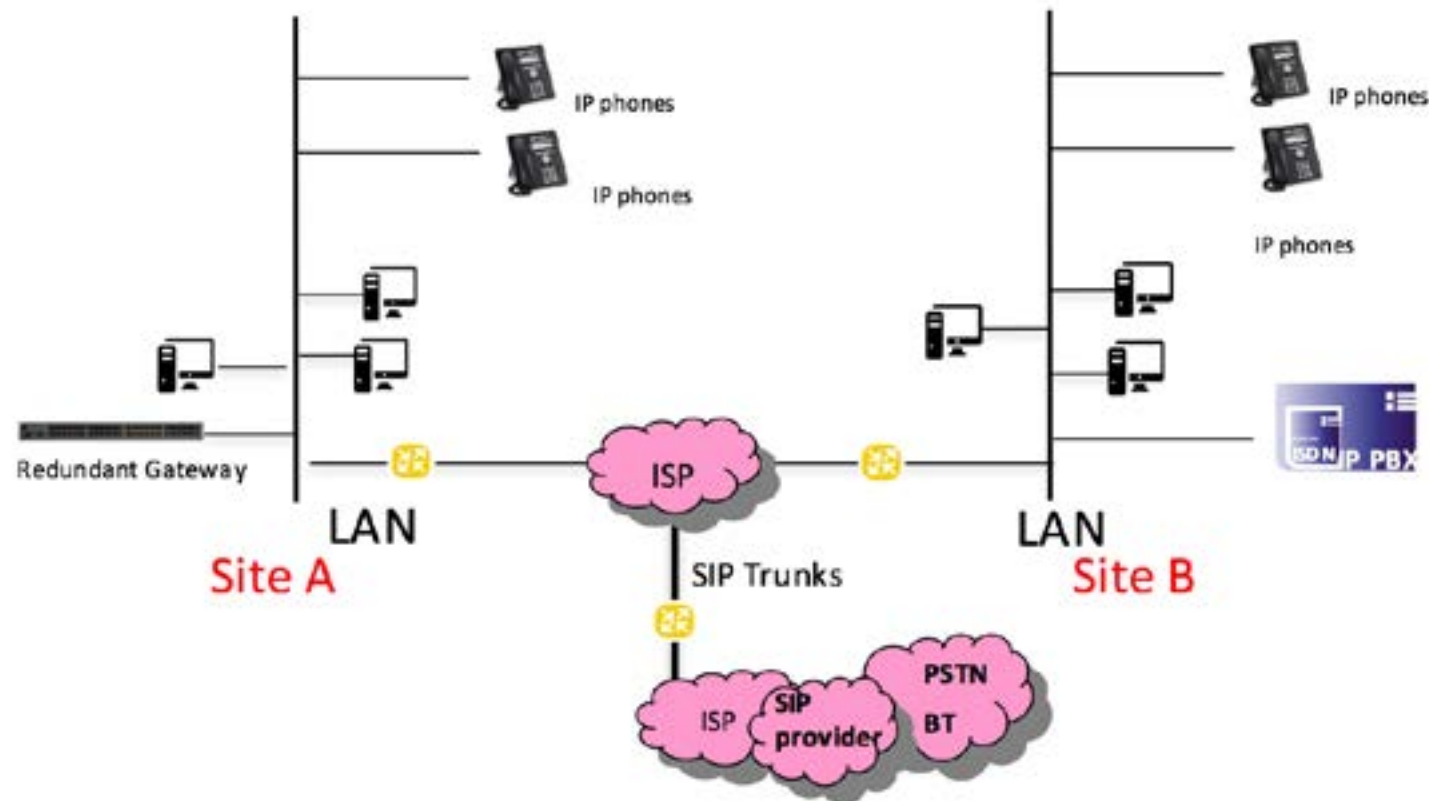


## STREAMLINING PBX HARDWARE

Companies operating from more than one office can make significant savings by streamlining their PBX hardware and adopting a single IP PBX or Cloud Based solution. Cost savings can be made by reducing the hardware, the number of maintenance contracts and by number of staff required to manage systems at each site.



As you can see from the image above this organisation has two separate telephone systems. By replacing both systems with an IP system it's possible to connect all IP phones to one PBX. A redundant gateway would mean that if the connection between the sites was lost calls could still be made via the ISDN lines. Alternatively, it would be possible to also replace the ISDN circuits with SIP Trunks, which are an alternative to ISDN circuits.



As you can see from the image above calls are still directed through BT's network. If the system at site B fails, site A would still be able to make calls.

## Future Consideration & Obstacles

It is worth highlighting that ISDN circuits will be phased out by BT in 2025, which means companies will need to have SIP Trunks implemented to ensure continuous service. Though 2025 seems pretty far off, it is worth pointing out that only an IP PBX or cloud based telephony solution can connect. Unfortunately, analogue or digital telephone system (unless they have an IP module bolt on that supports SIP) will not be able to connect to SIP trunks.

Good news is, however, there are some very good savings that can be made by replacing ISDN channels to SIP and therefore, if you have an IP System it is worth considering switching to SIP Trunks today, as other worthwhile advantages that include; faster to deploy, better resiliency with automatic failover and better management control.

## Replacing an Existing PBX

If this is a current requirement, anything other than an IP PBX or Cloud Solution shouldn't be considered, certainly not a digital or analogue PBX that isn't compatible with SIP Trunks. 2025 may seem far away, but there is little point installing a new PBX only to replace it in a few years. Though ISDN services will be available until 2025, services and support will likely diminish leading up to that date, making the service unreliable.

## What is a Cloud Based Telephony System?

Rather than owning and managing a system on site, a cloud based telephony solution provides an alternative whereby all the sophisticated connecting, routing of calls is all managed by a service provider whose system is housed in a data centre. All a business is required to manage is a POE Switch and SIP Phones that are connected to the service provider via a Fibre Connection (SIP Trunks). The initial configuration of the solution is generally done by the provider, however, once this has been setup the business can also have some control via web based portal to allow access to make configuration changes as they see fit. And as the solution is IP based phones can be moved around the office and plugged back in to the network without the need to re-patch at the patching cabinet.

Users can simply log into any phone to receive their incoming calls and voicemail messages in a comparable way to logging into a hotmail account on any PC to retrieve emails. Additional IP phones can be purchased for staff wishing to work from home. Once configured and plugged into a router the user will only need to log in to make and receive their calls from home.

A cloud based solution doesn't require a significant investment upfront, instead there are ongoing monthly charges based on the number of users. These charges will always remain in place for as long as the solution is being used. However, on a good note, there are no system upgrades or ongoing maintenance charges as keeping the system up to date is the responsibility of the service provider.

The background is a solid light blue color. It features faint, stylized white illustrations of a mobile phone on the left, a landline phone in the center, and three curved lines representing signal waves on the right.

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**telecom solution** for your  
business? Or do you just  
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