VoIP PHONE BUYERS GUIDE

Businesses seeking an affordable telephony solution are migrating to VoIP. Analog phones have become an outdated technology that even carriers are trying to rid themselves of. A VoIP system with IP phones is a cost-effective means of providing voice, video and conferencing solutions to your business.

Choosing the right VoIP phone can be a daunting task, because there are so many options available. Options to consider include protocol support, whether the phone is PoE-enabled or not, the number of line appearances, the number of ports on the back of the phone, and so on and so on. Not to mention, IP phones are available as desktop phones, wireless phones, with video capabilities, with expansion options, and more.

What Sets a VoIP Phone Apart?

The reasons that businesses are transitioning to VoIP are because of the many benefits it provides. First of all, because analog is costly for carriers to maintain, VoIP can drastically lower monthly telephone bills. Details such as line appearances are based virtually rather than physically, meaning that the infrastructure, phone set up and system scalability are also more affordable to maintain. These are just a few of the reasons that businesses are choosing VoIP and IP phones.

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VoIP Phone

A major difference between IP phones is the number of line appearances they support. This aspect isn’t unique to IP phones, but it’s a key factor in choosing an IP phone.

Line appearances are a representation of how many lines the phone can support at one time. This feature is visible on the phone’s interface. For example, a phone with four line appearances can keep two callers on hold, engage with one caller on another line, while still having another line open should all three callers need to be placed on hold.

A large amount of line appearances is important for power users such as receptionists, call centers and secretaries. Adding more line appearances is possible through compatible expansion modules.

Brands Include
- Aastra
- Avaya
- Cisco
- Grandstream
- Polycom
- Snom
- Yealink
- And More!

VoIP Conference Phone

IP conference phones offer the same advantages as IP phones, including affordability and scalability. VoIP provides these conference phones with a greater range of features for expanding your business’ voice communications.

Available accessories, including expansion microphones and speakers, allow you to increase the coverage range of a single device.

Brands Include: Avaya, Cisco, ClearOne, Konftel, Polycom, Snom and more.

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- And More!
VoIP Wireless Phone

Mobile workforces require wireless phones to communicate across large buildings and facilities. Wireless via WiFi or DECT connectivity provides a clear VoIP solution. The handsets are available with rugged designs, colorful and easy-to-use interfaces, and many different configurations.

WiFi phones connect to the network via wireless access points. Through a direct IP connection, these handsets can provide much more than voice. Some handsets include features such as web browsers and safety alarms.

DECT phones utilize repeaters to connect to a DECT base. Secure and encrypted voice through DECT has long been a trusted solution for allowing users to take their conversations with them throughout the office.

Available Accessories Include:
- Chargers, base stations and cables
- Batteries and power supplies
- Cases and holsters
- Servers, repeaters and access points

VoIP Video Phone

Video conferencing from the desktop via IP video phones allows your employees to communicate with coworkers and others face to face. These devices are ideal for telecommuters, chatting with clients and customers, and more.

The screens on some of these video phones can also be used to view the Internet and documents. This feature is dependent on the phone’s connectivity, but is ideal for future-proofing your office for upcoming technology.

Available Accessories Include:
- Cameras, cables and peripherals
VoIP Phone Accessories

To take full advantage of your IP phone’s features and functions may require add-ons and peripherals. These IP phone accessories include power supplies, licenses, replacement batteries and more.

View More
- Aastra Phone Accessories
- Cisco Phone Accessories
- Fortinet Phone Accessories
- Grandstream Phone Accessories
- Polycom Phone Accessories
- Snom Phone Accessories
- Yealink Phone Accessories

Expansion Modules

An expansion module connects to the IP phone through an available port, such as Ethernet, USB or a proprietary method. The expansion module can then be programmed to provide the user with real-time statuses of extensions. Connect a caller to a user in the office with the press of a button, rather than having to search for the extension and dialing it by hand.

Advanced expansion modules offer even more options, beyond displaying extensions and busy lamp fields.
VoIP Phone Brands

**Aastra VoIP Phone**
Aastra has long been an innovative force in business communications. IP phones from Aastra include desktop and wireless phones, and VoIP phones optimized for Microsoft Lync.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories

**Avaya VoIP Phone**
Avaya produces a large line of IP phones, available in different configurations and series. A wider selection ensures you’ll find the right phone, featuring Avaya’s quality manufacturing.

- Buyer’s Guide

**Cisco VoIP Phone**
Cisco’s IP phones include features such as SIP and SCCP protocol support, built-in cameras, and advanced UC capabilities. These phones can offer more than traditional VoIP.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories

**Digium VoIP Phone**
Designed to leverage your existing Asterisk system, Digium IP phones are feature-rich tools for telecommunications. Choose the right Digium desktop phone for your office.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories
VoIP Phone Brands

**Fortinet VoIP Phone**
Fortinet has established itself as a trusted provider of secure IP solutions, including VoIP phones. These phones give users a range of features for use with Fortinet systems or other compatible PBX's.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories

**Grandstream VoIP Phone**
Grandstream can bring your business communications into the mainstream with their selection of IP phones. These devices feature Grandstream’s time-tested quality and reliability.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories

**Panasonic VoIP Phone**
IP phones from Panasonic are well regarded for their ease of use and interoperability with existing phone systems. Deploy these devices in common areas, cubicles, offices or wherever you need a reliable phone on hand.

- Buyer’s Guide

**Polycom VoIP Phone**
Polycom’s cutting-edge solutions include a wide selection of IP phones. These VoIP solutions include wireless handsets, video phones, conference phones and more.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories
VoIP Phone Brands

**Snom VoIP Phone**

Snom has set out to establish itself as the leading supplier of open standards-based, reliable and rugged IP phones. These Snom devices include innovative conference phones and DECT phones.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories

**Spectralink VoIP Phone**

Spectralink’s IP phones include wireless DECT and WiFi handsets. These handsets are designed for withstanding hazardous workplaces and multi-shift environments, as well as office use.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories

**UniData VoIP Phone**

UniData WiFi phones connect to wireless access points, enabling the user freedom and connectivity throughout the building.

**Yealink VoIP Phone**

Yealink strives to manufacturer both eco-friendly and business-friendly VoIP solutions. These IP phones include advanced video and voice capabilities, with many accessories available.

- Buyer’s Guide
- Phone Accessories
Still not sure which IP solution is right for you? VoIP phones cater to different work environments, job descriptions, interaction preferences and more, all while needing to remain user-friendly. Part of being user-friendly rests on the user choosing the correct solution.

In choosing the right VoIP phone, here are a few considerations:

**General Considerations**

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**Line Appearances**

A line appearance is how your phone displays the lines that are connected or accessible to it. How you see the line on the phone’s interface, what details are included in the line appearance, and other details, depend on the phone model.

Choosing the correct line appearance is important. If you are a casual phone user, you may not be affected if you can’t see who is calling or from what line, but power users rely heavily on line appearance. Receptionists, for example, need access to every line plus detailed descriptions to ensure they are relaying the correct information.

Some phones can be expanded with attendant modules to display a long list of lines. For more basic phones, they cannot be expanded.
General Considerations

Switch Ports & Other Connections

Switch ports are what connect VoIP phones to the switch. These phones can have dual switch ports, which allows multiple IP devices to daisy chain together and borrow resources.

LAN and PC ports allow computers to connect to the phone and access the Internet via the phone's connection to the network switch. Some VoIP phones may also have built-in USB ports, which enable them to share data with other devices, and to transfer data to and from compatible USB storage devices.

Extra connectivity options are sometimes not immediately relevant or important, or they could be essential to assisting your everyday communications.

Wired Connections

Ethernet Speeds

VoIP phones receive data from the network switch via Ethernet cabling of varying available speeds and types. Standard Ethernet provides 10/100mbps, which is great for most basic VoIP phones; but large multimedia phones with video conferencing abilities will require more bandwidth to accommodate bandwidth-intensive traffic. Ethernet gigabit cabling allows ten-times the bandwidth as standard Ethernet, at 10/100/1000mbps.

PoE or AC Power

Another consideration is how your VoIP phone receives power. The VoIP phone you are interested will either use a traditional AC adapter, PoE, another connection type, or it can support two methods. Again, make sure everything is compatible.

PoE, for example, works by powering a PoE-enabled device through the PoE-enabled Ethernet port on the network switch. This kind of device might not include a connection for an AC adapter, or it could have both AC and PoE capabilities.
General Considerations

Standard vs. HD
The audio and video quality on your VoIP phone can either negatively or positively affect your appearance. Standard definition audio and video is recommended for more casual users, or for quickly communicating information. High definition audio and video is recommended for maintaining a higher level of professionalism; namely, for larger enterprises, video conferencing, or those looking to make a good impression.

The audio and video quality on your VoIP phone is largely determined by its connection to the network and its own capabilities to reproduce the data it’s receiving. Make sure your network can maintain a high definition device.

Screen/Display Size
Consider the screen size on your VoIP phone. If you would like a more versatile interface, then a larger screen is a good choice; if you just need to make phone calls, then a screen may not even be a necessary component.

Locations for a Small Screen:
- Cubicle
- Warehouse
- Waiting Room

Locations for a Large Screen:
- Receptionist
- Meeting Room
- Executive Office

Some VoIP phones also offer touchscreens and adjustable displays, which are ideal for video phones and those looking for a high-tech solution.
General Considerations

Protocol
A protocol is a set of rules that the VoIP phone and connected devices abide by to provide telephony. There are different types of protocols, such as SIP and SCCP. SCCP, for example, is a proprietary protocol used only on Cisco devices. SIP, on the other hand, is an open source protocol that is more widely used on telephony devices. Protocol features will vary, so a little research is helpful in determining the right solution.

Wired, Wireless or DECT?

- **Wired**
  Desktop phones provide the best quality possible, but sacrifice mobility. Headsets allow extended range of use for desktop phones, but rely on the phone’s base to send and receive information.

- **Wireless via Wi-Fi**
  Wireless Wi-Fi phones offer on-site mobility, allowing the handset to send and receive information via wireless access points. The more wireless access points, the greater range of use. The trade-off is that wireless phones sacrifice quality in doing so because Wi-Fi is not usually as reliable as a stable cord or cable.

- **Wireless via DECT**
  Wireless DECT phones are similar to wireless Wi-Fi phones, in that DECT phones rely on some kind of outside unit sending and receiving data to the phone. DECT phones connect wirelessly to a base unit that is plugged into the network, and this base unit can transmit signals to repeater units that extend the reach of the DECT phone.
IP phones are just one of IP Phone Warehouse’s many specialties. Chat with our dedicated technical support staff to learn more about IP phones, how to integrate them into your business, or just for general purchasing inquiries. We can guide you through what VoIP means to your business and what the specifications of any individual product can do for your productivity.

IP Phone Warehouse’s lines are available Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm CST.

Call us at: 1-888-201-9056.