

Moving on from your ISDN phone system

You may be aware that the technology behind how we make our telephone calls is changing and the withdrawal of copper phone lines is just around the corner. If you've been wondering what that means for your business we are here to help.

A lot has changed in recent years and copper ISDN technologies are no longer capable of delivering the volume or quality of voice data needed in our increasingly digital world. Instead of using traditional copper phone lines, voice calls will all be made over the internet, often known as VoIP, with many phone systems now being hosted in the cloud, rather than being physically on your premises. The copper based PSTN and ISDN network began shutting down in 2020 – with the aim of turning the network off entirely in 2025.

If you are still using ISDN technology you will be used to having a PBX located somewhere in your business premises. It's usually a box hosted in your comms room or mounted on a wall that has all of your office telephones connected to it.

What's the difference with a hosted voice system?

With a hosted voice system, that box doesn't need to live in your office. In fact, there isn't a box anymore. All the PBX software needed to transfer calls, manage voicemail, set auto attendants, etc. lives - or is hosted - in the cloud and phone calls travel across the internet instead of using the copper telephone wire network.

Why should I upgrade my PBX now?

If your PBX connects to the traditional phone network then its days are numbered.

In the UK the ISDN network is due to be switched off in 2025 and from then all calls will be made over an internet connection. Although this may seem like some way off, it's unlikely that much investment will be made between now and then into either maintenance of the ISDN network itself or the training of engineers in what is soon to be a redundant technology.

Is there anything else I can do?

Depending on its age, you might be able to upgrade your PBX to make it compatible with the new voice over internet technology. However, moving your phone system to the cloud will future proof your system and give you other advantages, including:

- Freedom from the costs and stress of maintaining equipment; your provider does it all for you.
- Scalability; add users quickly and easily. The sky's the limit.
- Flexibility; users can connect to the hosted system from practically any location (where the internet is reachable) using software on their mobile phone or computer, which means they can make & receive calls from anywhere but it looks like they're in the office.
- Easy updates; when new features are developed or a security patch needs to be applied, this is all done remotely. No need for an engineer to come to the office.

I've made calls over the internet using free software before and the quality was poor. Will this be the same?

A good quality provider of hosted voice services will use high quality technology and also ensure that your business internet connectivity is up to the job of transporting voice data. This results in your phone calls being crystal clear, with no drop-outs.

Should I trust the cloud to look after my phone system?

“The cloud” is a deceptively fluffy word that covers a range of options for storing data. When data is sent to the cloud, really it’s being stored on powerful computers chosen by your cloud hosting provider. That’s why it’s very important to be picky when choosing a provider; you need reassurance that they are storing your data responsibly, with appropriately stringent security and resilience measures in place. Once you’re reassured that this is the case, hosting your phone system in the cloud is similar to using cloud hosted emails in Microsoft 365.

What happens if I lose internet connection, would that mean we can’t make calls??

When you switch to an internet-based phone system it is a justified concern to plan for what might happen if your internet goes down. But the flexibility provided by a cloud phone system means there are several disaster recovery options and there should never be a scenario where you would not be able to make or receive calls.

Can I keep my existing phone number?

The simple answer to this is ‘Yes’, moving existing numbers to the BeamRing platform is straight forward and we handle all the arrangements for you.

Moving (or porting) your existing numbers to a different provider is regulated by Ofcom. For Beaming to start the porting process we’ll send you a templated ‘letter of authority’ for you to sign. This means your current provider must respect your wishes and has to cooperate with Beaming over the porting process, you don’t have to spend time contacting your current provider.

Do I need a special internet connection?

You’ll need to look at how many calls you’re likely to be making concurrently, but for most small and medium sized companies a business grade superfast broadband connection dedicated solely to handling voice traffic will handle the job nicely. If you have a dedicated fibre leased line we may recommend configuring your router to prioritise voice traffic to ensure you always have the best quality calls.

What equipment do I need?

You’ll need a suitable router, but after that it’s up to you. You could use IP desk phones, or, if your provider makes it available, you could go for an application that’s installed on your computer with a headset plugged in. Because it’s so easy to connect to your cloud hosted system, you can even install a softphone on a PC or an app on your mobile phone and use it to make and receive calls – all whilst presenting your usual business “landline” number.

How long does it take to install?

This will depend on the provider you choose but since configuration is all done remotely, telephone handsets can be sent to you ready to plug and play, and there are no engineer visits to book, the process is very simple. Typically we are able to get our BeamRing hosted voice solution live within 2-3 weeks of the order being placed. However, solutions are available if your business is unable to wait; for one customer we were able to move them to BeamRing within 24 hours following a natural disaster.

Why choose BeamRing?

Built by Beaming to bring together the most reliable connectivity and technology to provide businesses with a flexible IP telephony solution. As well as offering a wide range of features to create the right solution for your business, BeamRing offers:

- Cloud based ‘hosted’ phones via the BeamRing platform, un-reliant on physical hardware (such as a PBX) and the associated investment and lifecycles.
- A service that is supported and fully managed directly by Beaming with tight service level agreements.
- A simple supply chain with no resellers involved or multiple third-parties.
- Built-in disaster recovery plans, so whatever happens your business will always be reachable.
- Easy budgeting with no costly equipment maintenance or upgrades and clear monthly cost centre billing.