



White Paper

Why Multi-Site Businesses Benefit from an Integrated Unified Communications and Cloud Phone System

When a business spans more than one location, the cost and complexity of maintaining a conventional phone system can present major challenges. These include large investments in PBX (public branch exchange) telephone systems at each site, as well as the cost of maintaining these systems. Additionally, customers often cannot reach your employees in various locations from a single company number, or employees cannot direct extension-dial coworkers in other offices.

To make matters worse, whether as the result of organic growth or acquisitions, IT has often inherited a patchwork of disparate hardware, solutions, and providers. Managing and supporting all of this—both from an IT and an accounting perspective—can be time-consuming, frustrating, and even unnerving.

From chasing down PBX problems at distant sites to managing separate telco relationships, having multiple systems across multiple locations can strain your resources and budgets. The assorted PBX systems are often based on an array of proprietary technologies, have uneven repair schedules, and fail at different rates. They also may handle calls differently depending on the location, which can cause confusion for customers. In addition, the business associate relationships required to keep multiple systems running and connected have different SLAs, expiration dates, and billing cycles.

Ultimately, the lack of a unified phone system hampers communication and collaboration, which negatively impacts employee productivity, customer service, and your company's bottom line.

Does your organization experience these issues?

- Complex maintenance, support, and training needed for PBX hardware from different manufacturers (some near end-of-life)
- The inability of employees in one office to easily extension-dial or transfer calls to employees at other locations
- No effective integration of telephony into a unified communications (UC) approach in order to unify all communication and collaboration across the company
- Managing complicated relationships with different carriers for line service, system updates, and changes, as well as separate bills

Centralizing your phone system in the cloud bypasses the outdated copper-wire model, which depends on PBX hardware and telco connectivity at each location. A cloud communications system serves all locations—large, small, global, and even at-home offices—via the internet. Consequently, your business benefits from a number of fundamental changes in the network (including relationships with telcos), how users are served, and how customers and partners interact with employees. Plus, the ability to manage the entire system from one location translates into significant time- and cost-savings for the IT team. However, when you move the PBX functionality out of the building and into the cloud, mobile workers have direct access to the same phone system used by on-site workers. They enjoy the same business desk phone features—such as extension-dialing and direct voicemail access—as office staff.

Top benefits of a cloud phone system for multi-location businesses

Among the numerous advantages for businesses with multiple locations, a cloud communications system:

- Eliminates the expense of PBX hardware/software (including upgrades and maintenance) at each location
- Streamlines phone-line management—i.e., eliminates the need for costly trunk lines, PRIs, or bonded T1s from each business location to the telco
- Cuts the costs and complexities of business exchange line connectivity
- Allows customers to leverage the latest technologies and updates provided by the unified communications as a service (UCaaS) and cloud phone system provider
- Provides the synergies of a true unified approach, including integration with other modalities like video, voice, chat, etc.
- Makes it easier to support direct transfers and direct extension-dialing between business locations
- Gives customers and partners easy access to employees from one corporate telephone number
- Eliminates the need for trained staff at multiple sites, calls to local third-party support services, or sending IT staff members with telephony experience to each location every time changes are needed or system problems occur
- Dramatically simplifies office moves, setup of new locations, and user moves/adds/changes
- Immediately reduces international calling charges for organizations with global offices

Reducing the network cost and complexity of connecting multiple locations

Figure 1 depicts the telco connections—as well as the respective telco relationships—necessary to connect multiple business locations with a conventional phone system. Note that each site requires PBX hardware as well as local maintenance of the hardware and software.

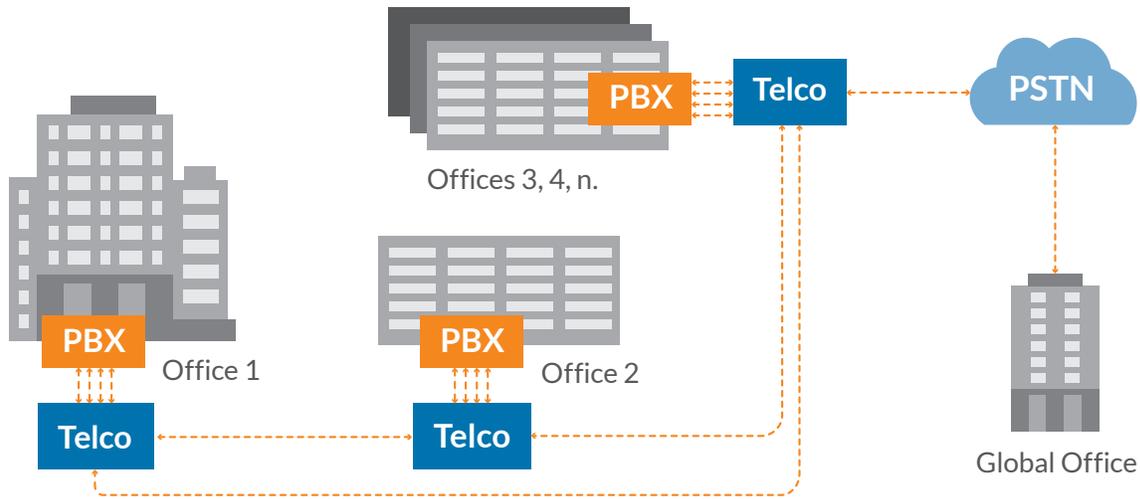


Figure 1

Figure 2 shows how an IP PBX enables integration with the internet and IP telephony features and functions, yet similarly relies on telco connectivity to connect multiple locations. IP PBX systems are also needed at each location, along with the associated capex, opex, maintenance, and upgrade costs.

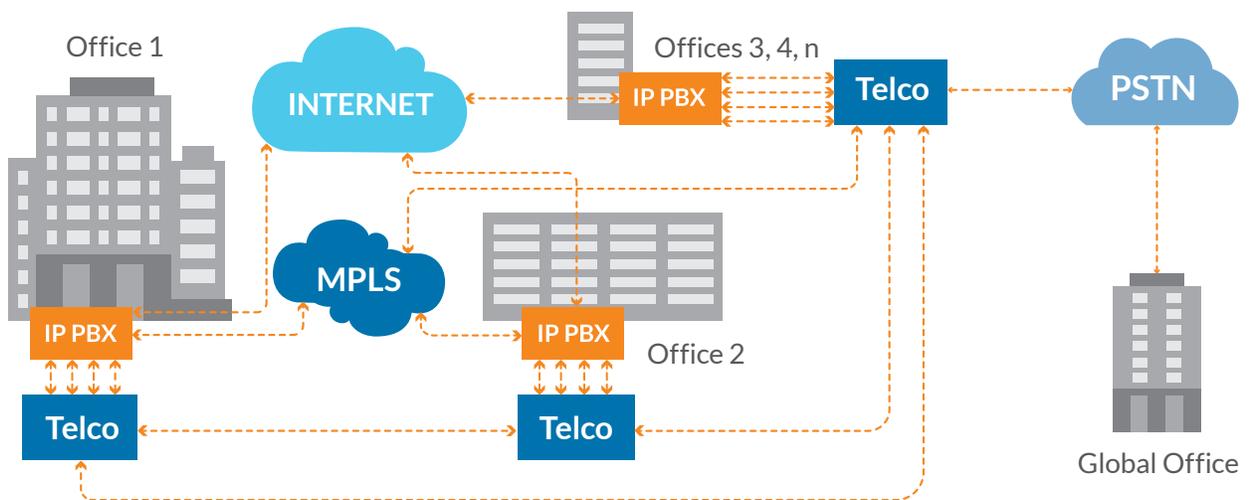


Figure 2

Figure 3 illustrates how employees in all locations—including home offices and workers on the go—share the same robust features and functionality when using a cloud-based phone system (including voice, fax, text, conferencing, and online meetings).

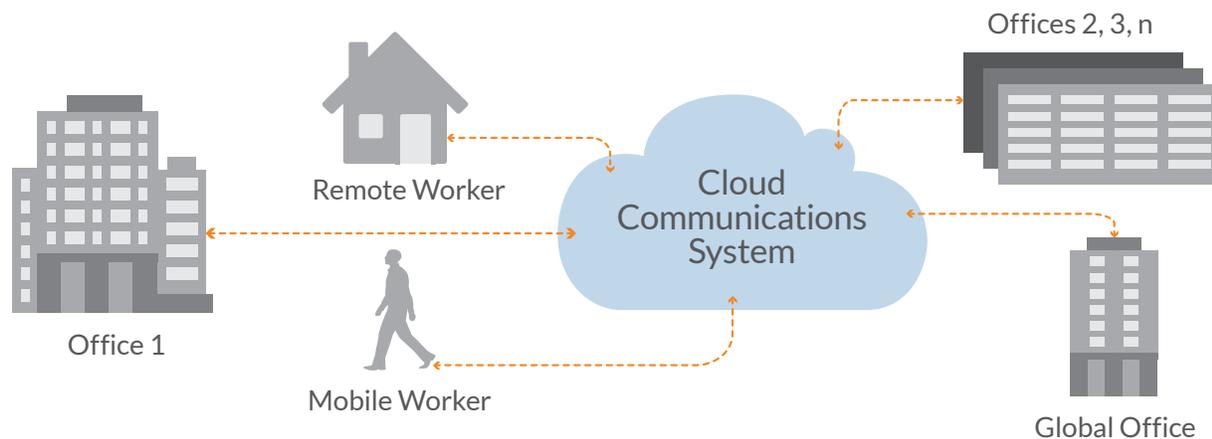


Figure 3

This approach is designed from the ground up to handle a new type of enterprise—one with multiple sites, global offices, and a growing number of remote and mobile workers. It inherently eliminates not only the investment in PBX hardware at each location but also the cost and complexity of enabling connectivity between them. It further provides the benefits of a completely integrated phone system across locations, such as the ability to transfer calls or dial coworkers using four-digit extensions.

Benefits for various types of businesses

This unique ability to serve and connect multiple locations via a single, cloud-based PBX revolutionizes communications for a broad range of industries and business types:

- Distributed enterprises—a chain of dental offices, for example—with many locations but few employees in each location can provide those employees with the power of a complete business phone system—even though a full-scale PBX at each site would be financially impractical.
- Consulting firms can set up virtual extensions of the firm at client locations while maintaining a unified business identity for their consultants.
- Technology companies can accommodate rapid growth, expand into markets where they can access scarce talent, or open global offices without the conventional costs and difficulties. The cloud is also uniquely capable of supporting mobility, and many tech firms now view mobile workers as “locations.”
- Construction companies can quickly start up temporary locations and seamlessly integrate site workers with the larger enterprise. This includes delivering critical features such as integrated faxing and conferencing.
- Real estate businesses can unify a number of small offices while providing customers with a single number for office phone, fax, and mobile devices.

Streamlined management

You would never consider having on-site staff to maintain a local website for every one of your business locations; centralizing your company's web team and infrastructure has obvious benefits. The same goes for your phone system, where having experts in telephony, PBX hardware, and data security at each site is unnecessarily expensive.

Compared to a conventional, on-premise PBX that requires skilled telephony staff to be on site for maintenance or moves/adds/changes, the cloud dramatically simplifies management. Any IT employee—with or without telephony experience or PBX certification—can set up new users and provision new lines within seconds from a web-based management console. This capability includes granular management of users, such as assigning extensions or setting up call-handling options. All this can be done from one central location. Users can also easily set up their own preferences, and this self-help capability further offloads non-strategic work from IT.

This ease of management extends from individual users to company-wide phone system parameters, such as setting up the auto attendant so that customers hear the specific messages you want them to hear. Within the web-based console, you can also group users at different locations into company-wide departments.

When coupled with plug-and-play phones, this centralized management capability makes it much easier to move a location or set up a new one. Other VoIP solutions require IT staff to be physically present at the new site and to program each user's phone. RingCentral handsets come preconfigured right out of the box. You simply enter a request in the management console, the phones are drop-shipped, and when they arrive, the end users just plug them into Ethernet ports. The phones are programmed to call home to the network, so provisioning new users happens automatically.

The screenshot displays the RingCentral Admin Portal interface for managing a user named John Doe (Ext. 56789). The top navigation bar includes the RingCentral logo, an Admin Portal dropdown, and user information (John | (555) 123-5555 Ext. 56789 | Get Help | Log Out). Below this is a secondary navigation bar with tabs for Phone System, Users (selected), Reports, Call Log, Billing, and Tools. The main content area is divided into three columns:

- Left Column (Navigation Menu):** Contains icons and labels for User Details, Phones & Numbers, Screening, Greeting & Hold Music, Call Handling & Forwarding, Messages & Notifications, Outbound Caller ID, and Outbound Fax Settings.
- Middle Column (User Details):** Displays the user's information and settings. Fields include Extension Number, First Name (John), Last Name (Doe), Record User Name, Contact Phone, Mobile Phone, and Email (john.doe@gmail.com). There are checkboxes for "Use email to log in" and "Verify Email Uniqueness". Below these are sections for Roles (Super Admin with an Edit button), User Groups (None with an Edit button), and a checkbox for "Yes, I would like to receive information on product education, training materials, etc.". At the bottom are expandable sections for User Hours (24 hours), User Password, Regional Settings, and Schedule Meetings for Me.
- Right Column (Video Tutorials):** Features a "Video Tutorials" section with a video player for "Overview: User Extension" (17693 views) and a link to "Watch video". An "Additional Help" link is at the bottom right.

From moves/adds/changes to setting up whole new locations, IT staff with or without telephony experience can easily manage the entire phone system. With the cloud, all it takes is internet access and a web-based management console.

Greater control

While some telephony experts worry that lack of physical access to the PBX means a loss of control, most cloud users find they actually gain greater control over the phone system. For example, even at odd hours or while traveling, an IT admin can make a change—such as adding new lines and users or groups of users—from a laptop or mobile device.

Simplified security and regulatory compliance

Centralizing the PBX—as well as voice, voicemail, fax, text, audio conferencing, and online meetings—in the cloud also centralizes data security. This eliminates ensuring that the latest security policies are in place at each location. In the RingCentral system, all of this functionality—and valuable company IP or confidential data associated with faxes, voicemails, or other features—is housed in secure, geographically redundant data centers. Highly trained data security professionals stay abreast of the latest industry and government regulatory requirements—such as encryption of data at rest, which is mandated by HIPAA—to ensure your phone system is always in compliance. In fact, the RingCentral platform is rated as enterprise-ready by the Skyhigh CloudTrust™ Program.

Summary

Whether due to rapid growth or mergers and acquisitions, many organizations find themselves with multiple locations and an assortment of incompatible on-site PBX systems. This results in poor communication and collaboration among workers at the various sites. For example, there is often no easy way to extension-dial people at other locations. IT must also spend time managing not only PBXs with varying maintenance requirements but also the relationships necessary to connect them to the telcos and other locations. And without any capability for centralized management, making simple, yet mission-critical changes might require a truck roll.

To survive, multi-location companies must remain flexible and agile enough to adapt to the shifting business landscape. They also need centralized control and governance of billing, administration, SLAs, and the end-user experience. With IT budgets strained, a multi-location business further needs a system that simplifies management and drastically reduces maintenance and oversight of the entire corporate phone system.

An integrated UC system such as RingCentral Office® not only does away with the up-front investment in multiple PBXs but also eliminates the maintenance required to keep them running. It further reduces the cost and complexity of connecting these locations—as well as the associated telco relationships. The RingCentral system is designed to scale globally and built to deliver secure communications with high quality of service, no matter how fast you grow.

Better still, its single administration portal simplifies maintenance and gives you full control to remotely manage users, new lines, and extensions for all of your office locations. Consolidated billing also provides one clear and convenient service bill each month, no matter how many locations you have. Finally, because your IT staff members no longer need to become experts in specific PBX hardware, telephony networks, and data security, they can focus on adding value to the business.

These benefits extend to global offices, which have typically required IT leaders to navigate a confusing landscape of local carriers and regulations. With RingCentral, rolling out and supporting multinational offices is fast and easy, such as instant activation of numbers directly chosen from the number pool of regional carriers, which gives your global offices a true local presence. Other benefits include immediately reducing international calling charges as international extension-to-extension calls are included in the global phone service at no extra cost.

Ultimately, with an enterprise-class cloud communications system like RingCentral, employees located anywhere in the world can all be on the same secure communications network, accessing the same robust business features from a single business phone system. You're now able to provide a consistent voice, messaging, and collaboration experience across your workforce to increase productivity while reducing your IT overhead.

About RingCentral

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE:RNG) is the leading provider of cloud-based global collaborative communications solutions. More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises systems, RingCentral empowers today's mobile and distributed workforce to communicate, collaborate, and connect from anywhere, on any device. RingCentral unifies voice, video, team messaging and collaboration, conferencing, online meetings, and integrated contact center solutions. RingCentral's open platform integrates with leading business apps and enables customers to easily customize business workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.

**For more information, contact a sales representative
at ringcentral.com or call 800-820-3676.**