

How to Protect Your All-Important Business Number during a SIP Upgrade

The advantages of SIP trunking are too great to ignore. You can select how many phone lines you need for each office, how many local and toll-free numbers you require, and what enhanced services (such as voicemail or WebFax) can drive productivity for your enterprise. Many of these enhanced services can be customized for your specific business or for each employee's specific job requirements. For example, you can select find me/follow me service to ensure that an employee can always receive calls while traveling.

But when deploying a new SIP platform, you must be careful to protect your business telephone number, and ensure that it is ported over to your new phone system. Your business telephone number is part of your corporate identity, and it should be guarded as zealously as your own personal identity. Think about what happens if you lose your number: You will need to reinvest heavily in changing the number on all of your corporate communications. Clients that have not conducted business with you in some time may not know about the change, and will be unable to reach you. Changing your business contact number can potentially cost your business revenue over time.

So how do you protect your number, while gaining the advantages of a SIP upgrade? The first step is to make sure the SIP vendor you are considering is fully-versed in number portability. Under the Federal Communications

Commission's (FCC's) "local number portability" (LNP) rules, if you remain in the same geographic area, you can switch telephone service providers, including interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) providers, and keep your existing phone number. If you are moving from one geographic area to another, however, you may not be able to take your number with you .

You can get around the geography issue by deploying VoIP, as most VoIP vendors have the ability to port in a number from a traditional phone carrier, regardless of the location. But the reverse may not always be true, as a phone carrier may not accept a number coming from a VoIP vendor.

Take a blended approach

To get around these issues, we recommend taking a blended approach to SIP trunking. Rather than replacing all of your phone lines, integrate SIP trunks into an existing analog system. You can keep your main corporate number and corporate fax number on analog to eliminate number porting issues. Then, you can move your 1.800 numbers to SIP to gain substantial savings (usually about 50% over traditional analog lines).

Surging Demand Creates "Wide Open" SIP Trunking Market

Reports by the leading market research firm Infonetics reveal that growing demand from business is spurring on impressive growth in the SIP Trunking market. In fact, one third of enterprises are already using SIP Trunks while 42% plan to next year according to a recent survey by Infonetics. Looking forward to 2015, 58% of companies plan to use SIP Trunking. Why is this? Decision makers said that centralization and easier management were two of the biggest draws. SIP Trunking allows companies to get rid of expensive 800 numbers, combine data and voice and transform all calls into essentially local calls. In other words, SIP Trunking streamlines communication, enhances functionality and reduces costs. For service providers dealing with businesses looking to upgrade their phone systems, it's not exactly a hard sell.



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The blended method has the added advantage of taking a distributed approach to protecting business critical communications. If your Internet connection goes down for any reason, the system can be configured to automatically reroute calls from SIP trunks to analog lines. You also gain a benefit in using multiple carriers. If one carrier goes down, calls can be routed to the lines of the other carrier.

If you decide that porting your main corporate number really is the most efficient way to gain the benefits of a new system, here are some tips to ensure a smooth transition⁴.

- Do not cancel service with your existing provider until service with the new provider has started.
- Your new provider can start the transition process by coordinating with the old provider. Be prepared to provide the new company with your 10-digit phone number, customer account number, and five-digit zip code. If you had created a passcode to protect your account, you may also need to provide that passcode.
- You may have to pay early termination fees according to the terms of your existing contract with the provider. You may also need to pay any outstanding balance with the old provider. Review your bill or contract to determine what fees or charges apply.
- Be aware that once you request service from a new vendor, your old company may not refuse to port your number, even if you owe money for an outstanding balance or termination fee.

The advantages of SIP trunking and other next-generation phone technology are driving up productivity and driving down cost. You just need to take some simple precautions to minimize any disruption to your business when making the jump to a new communications platform. In the end, the benefits you gain from your new system will make the effort very worthwhile.

¹ "SIP Trunking to Grow at 89% CAGR to 2013; Hosted UC Taking Off Amid Strong VoIP Services Growth," Infonetics Research, (May 4, 2009), <http://www.infonetics.com/pr/2009/2h08-voip-UC-market-research-highlights.asp>

² Data according to AccessLine Voice Services, <http://www.accessline.com/SIPTrunking/interior.asp?nav=nWHATIS>

³ "Portability: Keeping Your Phone Number When Changing Service Providers," Federal Communications Commission, <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/portability-keeping-your-phone-number-when-changing-service-providers>

⁴ Tips based on information provided by the FCC, <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/portability-keeping-your-phone-number-when-changing-service-providers>



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