

*THE STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO*  
**CHOOSING A CLOUD-BASED  
BUSINESS VOIP SOLUTION**







# COMMUNICATIONS ARE THE FOUNDATION OF EVERY BUSINESS.



Let's be clear. The telephone is still the best way to connect with prospects, customers, suppliers, and partners to get things done. It isn't surprising that cloud-based VoIP is becoming the phone solution of choice for Canadian businesses. It provides organizations of all sizes with a professional-grade phone system and advanced features that historically were only accessible to enterprise class companies.

It is important to know what to look for when selecting a cloud-based VoIP solution and provider. This guide will help you ask the right questions, evaluate your options, and ensure you take into account the most frequently overlooked considerations when choosing a service.

## THE GAME HAS CHANGED

No longer is "the office" the only place of business. Employees expect the flexibility to work and do business anywhere at any time and require access to the same communications features they would traditionally have in an office. A unified communication experience is something all businesses need to consider to eliminate geographical and technological barriers and keep mobile and remote workers, road warriors, and virtual teams connected.

## INVESTMENTS HAVE SHIFTED

Companies who once invested in on-premise PBX systems are now looking for more cost-effective options. Many traditional on-premise PBX systems are nearing or past their End of Life (EOL) and are no longer being supported by their vendors. Organizations are looking for replacement solutions that will scale without having to bear the maintenance burden and restriction of 'in the box' functionality or 'on the wall' solutions.

Cloud-based phone solutions adapt to changing business needs, reduce maintenance costs, and provide closer integration with organizational systems. As a result, organizations are shifting their own investments from in-house, on-premise solutions to more cost-effective cloud technologies.

## THIS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE WILL:

- outline the essential features of a business phone solution
- arm you with the right questions to ask when evaluating vendors, and
- provide you with insight on service levels you are entitled to as a customer.



# COVERAGE

## CAN THE PROVIDER SERVICE MY AREA(S)?

### TO-DO:

- Verify if your existing business phone number(s) can be ported to the provider's service

If your phone number has been used for a significant length of time or has been heavily promoted for your business, porting your existing number(s) is imperative to have a seamless transition to a new VoIP system. If a provider doesn't offer coverage of your area, you may not be able to use their service.

A surprising number of cloud-based VoIP providers can only serve a restricted local area, so coverage and serviceability should be the first question to ask. Ensure all of your field offices, remote workers, and virtual teams have coverage and that the provider will be able to support your business growth plans to expand to new target locations.

*Versature offers extensive service coverage and phone number availability in over 1,600 Canadian locations from coast to coast. Keep your existing number(s) or request new number(s) for existing and new locations.*

*Check number availability now at [versature.com/number-availability](https://www.versature.com/number-availability)*

# LINES OR SEATS

## HOW MUCH DO YOU HAVE TO PAY?

### TO-DO:

- Determine if the provider is still charging for "lines" in the "old school" business model

This historical practice dates back to the old telecom days when a phone company would count on a business installing and paying for more lines than required. Telecommunications companies took advantage of an organization's fear that a customer may receive a busy signal when calling in and, as a result, would then take their business elsewhere.

If a provider is talking about charging your organization on a per-line basis, this should be an immediate red flag as it is an outdated practice that has been rendered obsolete by VoIP technologies. Some providers still use per-line billing as a revenue generating opportunity, even though there is no longer any physical line limitations with business phone solutions and therefore no requirement to charge per-line. Why guess who many lines you will need based on our busiest day when more advanced cloud-based VoIP providers will automatically adjust the number of lines as you need it? If a service provider is still charging "per-line", it is a good idea to keep looking.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Versature can procure phone numbers in Canada and the USA! Local phone numbers can give your business a competitive edge, so choose an area code based on where your customers are.

# FEATURES











## DO THE FEATURES MEET MY BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS?

### TO-DO:

- Separate your must-have features into 3 categories: business & operations, call control, and integrations

















### BUSINESS & OPERATIONAL FEATURES

Before you begin your search for a business phone system, identify exactly what you hope the new system will help your business accomplish regarding branding, operations, efficiency, and user experience. For example, you might need multiple call queues for sales and customer support teams, or a toll-free number so your clients don't have to pay for a long distance call. You may also need to analyze and report on call data or record calls to verify and improve customer service levels. From an administration perspective, the IT department may need a web-based admin portal to manage and changes or updates to the system.

-  LOCAL PHONE NUMBERS
-  PROFESSIONAL RECORDING SERVICES
-  MULTIPLE PHONE NUMBERS (FOR MULTIPLE LOCATIONS OR DIDs)
-  911 DIALLING
-  TOLL-FREE PHONE NUMBERS
-  UNLIMITED CANADA & USA LONG DISTANCE
-  REAL-TIME ANALYTICS & DASHBOARDS
-  COMPETITIVE INTERNATIONAL CALLING RATES
-  ADMINISTRATION PORTAL
-  SERVICE ALERTS

### CALL CONTROL FEATURES

Consider the types of call control functionality that will be or are currently being used most frequently at your organization. Features like Caller ID, call forwarding, hold, and call transfer are only a few of the standard features available on the market today. It's time to start taking telecommunications a step further with features that will help organizations scale more efficiently while providing the best possible experience to callers. Advanced features such as time of day answering rules, social caller ID, visual call waiting, and voicemail to email enable companies to provide the highest level of service and the flexibility to be connected and conduct business from wherever staff are located.

-  THREE-WAY CALLING
-  FIND ME/FOLLOW ME
-  CALL PARK/CALL RETRIEVE
-  CALL RECORDING
-  CALL FORWARD
-  ADVANCED CALLER ID
-  SIMULTANEOUS RING ACROSS MULTIPLE DEVICES
-  VOICEMAIL TO EMAIL & VOICEMAIL TRANSCRIPTIONS
-  MUSIC OR CUSTOM MESSAGING ON HOLD
-  CALL PRIVACY
-  BLIND OR ATTENDED CALL TRANSFERS
-  DO NOT DISTURB
-  CALL CONFERENCING
-  ADVANCED AUTO ATTENDANT & DIGITAL RECEPTION
-  PAGING
-  CALL QUEUES & RING GROUPS

### DID YOU KNOW?

Cloud-based voice technology has been around since the 90s. It's time to get on board!

*Versature's cloud-based VoIP service operates using a Software as a Service (SaaS) model and charges per seat (in other words, "per extension"), not per line. Managing the number of lines used during fluctuating call volumes is simply part of the service that Versature provides its customers and is included in the subscription cost at no additional charge.*

*See all the features included in every Versature plan at [versature.com/pricing](https://www.versature.com/pricing)*

## INTEGRATIONS

Every business phone system should provide value beyond core and advanced business features. Data collected from call activity is extremely valuable when shared with other business systems, turning call activity into actionable insights. Whether you are looking to capture call activity from sales and support teams in a CRM or use call recordings for training and mentoring purposes, your cloud-based phone system should offer a variety of integrations with other business systems. In some cases, organizations may wish to build their own integrations into proprietary systems or off-the-shelf solutions. To ensure this capability is available, the service provider must have a supported open API for clients to extend and add value to their business phone solution.



**CRM INTEGRATIONS**  
(SALESFORCE, BLUEC, ETC.)



**INTEGRATION WITH GOOGLE SHEETS™**



**SOCIAL CALLER ID**



**DASHBOARDS & DATA TOOLS**



**WEB BROWSER CLICK TO DIAL APPS**



**OPEN API FOR CUSTOM INTEGRATIONS**

## DID YOU KNOW?

Cloud-based voice technology has been around since the 90s. It's time to get on board!

# CONTRACT

## WILL MY BUSINESS BE LOCKED IN? WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

### TO-DO:

- Ask about the contract term, details, limitations, and of course, the perks.

If your business is committing to a contract term, the vendor should be able to back up their offer by adding some bonus perks to the deal. Some providers, especially traditional telecommunication companies, require long-term contracts that offer no substantial benefits to the signee. These contracts may be too rigid for a company who anticipates scaling or foresees and changes to their business phone requirements during the term of the agreement. Even if the provider uses language that avoids the term “contract”, ensure these questions still get answered in full:

- Will I have to renegotiate our contract every time our business expands?
- If we need to reduce our commitment, will we be locked into the original deal until it expires?
- What happens as my business changes? For example, what if I open a new office location or start having my employees work from home?
- If I want to take my business elsewhere, are there any cancellation fees?
- What is involved in transferring my business numbers to another provider?

*Versature knows that a contractual commitment is a big consideration for a company. Our approach to contracts is to ensure there is value on both sides for a win-win relationship.*

*Versature customers enjoy free Polycom phone rentals, volume pricing discounts, special not-for-profit pricing, unlimited Canadian-based technical support, and more.*

*Learn more about our tailored solution for your industry at [versature.com/solutions](https://versature.com/solutions)*

# GUARANTEES & SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLAs)

## IS THERE A MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE?

### TO-DO:

- Ask the provider if they offer refunds and about their commitment to their SLAs.

Seriously, will the service provider refund your money if you are not satisfied for whatever reason? Find out how the provider handles cancelled services. If after a few weeks you determine that the service is not suitable for your business, will the service provider refund your investment in the services and business phones you purchased? If not, you may wish to ask them why they don't stand behind their products and services with this type of guarantee. It may be indicative of potential service problems or a "get the deal and dash" approach to customer acquisition.

A service level agreement (SLA) is a promise by a business phone provider to provide a certain level of quality and performance, and agree to specific penalties if the SLA is not upheld.

Ask whether your prospective cloud-based business phone provider has an SLA, and if so, ask to see the SLA commitments in writing. The SLA should be easy to read and understand, and be included as part of your contract with the provider.

*At Versature we pride ourself in full transparency and make our SLA available to the public on our website so prospects and customers alike understand and appreciate our commitment to customer success.*

*Check our SLA at [versature.com/SLA-returns](https://www.versature.com/SLA-returns)*

# SUPPORT

## WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT IS INCLUDED?

### TO-DO:

- Ask providers about technical support model and how customer success is measured

Support and customer success should be paramount for any company, because what is better than having successful customers? Think of these questions when evaluating providers for technical support:

- Do I have to pay an additional cost to receive support?
- Where is the support based? Do they understand the nuances of Canadian business? Can they communicate effectively with my team?
- Is support available in English and French?
- What level of training does the support team have? Do they have hands-on knowledge of the phone system, deployment, network architecture, and troubleshooting?
- How does the support team handle issues involving 3rd party technologies?
- Is there a way to get assistance outside of standard business hours for mission critical issues? Does this service cost extra?
- How long does it take to get in touch with a knowledgeable support agent?
- Is there a tiered level of support? Are all sizes of customer provided with the same access to the best customer care?

*All Versature customers have access to our Canadian-based help desk staffed by fully-bilingual expert technicians any time between 8AM and 6PM Monday to Thursday, and 8AM to 5PM on Friday. For mission critical issues, there is 24/7 emergency on-call support.*

*Learn about the Versature difference at [versature.com/why-versature](https://www.versature.com/why-versature)*

# CUSTOMERS

## WHAT IS THE PROVIDER'S CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TRACK RECORD?

### TO-DO:

- Find out the size of the provider's customer base and the level of customer churn

Happy customers want to tell others of their experience, so being provided with customer case studies and references means that a service provider has happy and successful customers. Even more important is if the service provider has a track record of successful customers in your industry or geographical location. Follow the steps below to determine if you would be a good fit with each service provider you're considering:

- Ask who the provider's "perfect fit" customer is
- Evaluate whether your company fits that customer profile, or whether your business' profile is more in the vendor's peripheral vision
- Are there any case studies or customer testimonials you can access?
- Are there any reference customers with a business similar to yours that can speak to you about their experience with the service provider?
- Does the vendor have any expertise in your industry or with your particular use case(s)?

# LONGEVITY

## HOW LONG HAS THE PROVIDER BEEN IN BUSINESS?

### TO-DO:

- Research how long the service providers you are considering have been in business

Not all VoIP offerings were created equal. Service providers need to make ongoing and significant investments in their network, hardware, systems, software, support, and industry partnerships to maintain a high-quality business phone service. When looking for a business phone provider, it is important to look for a company that has longevity, a commitment to the business they are in, and in-depth industry experience to ensure your organization receives the best business phone service and customer support. Always ask a potential provider how long they have been in business for and about the types of investments they make in their systems to make sure it is of the calibre required to support the demands of a robust business communications solution. Be wary of pop-up VoIP shops or companies who simply offer an add-on VoIP service that doesn't have a stable team, required service levels, or enterprise-grade infrastructure to support it.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Pop-up VoIP shops are the latest addition to the business phone mix. They tend to appear and disappear again quickly, lacking the technical and business resources required to support your company. Make sure your chosen provider has a solid track record and vision for the future.



# FOCUS

## WHAT IS THE PROVIDER'S MAIN BUSINESS PURPOSE?

### TO-DO:

- Research how focused the service provider is on business communications

Business VoIP is sometimes an attractive add-on for companies who offer a myriad of other services. Is the provider focused on providing business services, or are they split between residential and enterprise offerings? If the provider does focus on business offerings, do they have the expertise to deliver and support a business VoIP solution or do they have so many “things for sale” that your organization will carry the burden of inflated overhead costs and non-dedicated support?

*At Versature we focus solely on providing VoIP services for businesses in Canada. It's what we do best, and we've been doing it since 2003.*

*Check out our history at [versature.com/about](https://www.versature.com/about)*

# TRANSPARENCY

## HOW MUCH CRITICAL INFORMATION DOES THE PROVIDER SHARE WITH YOUR BUSINESS?

### TO-DO:

- Find out hidden fees, uptime reporting and alerts, and provider/customer communication channels if something goes wrong

Traditionally, the telecommunications industry has been notorious for engaging in unscrupulous practices in everything from pricing structure, cancellation or change in service costs, additional fees, and their own network availability and uptime. Signing on with a new vendor is a chance to break away from this practice. Is the pricing clear and straightforward or are there additional fees? Check for “surprises” between your quoted price (verbal or in print) and your contract price. Are there differences, and if so, can the provider explain the reasoning behind them? Ask your potential provider how they report and notify their customers with regards to network issues that may affect your business. Your service provider should be able to outline for you a strict contingency plan in the even of an unforeseen outage that ensures your organization is equipped to continue operating with minimal disruptions.

*Versature's TRUST website keeps our partners, customers, and prospects informed on the latest service levels.*

*Check our track record at [trust.versature.com](https://www.trust.versature.com)*

# QUALITY OF SERVICE

## HOW WILL QUALITY OF SERVICE BE ADDRESSED BY THE PROVIDER?

### TO-DO:

- Ask about what measures the provider has in place to ensure you can rely on their service

Quality of Service (QoS) refers to the ability to provide a different priority to certain internet-based applications, users, or types of data to assure a desired level of performance. Ensure that your business phone service provider has a QoS strategy in place, meaning your business operations are never affected and that you always receive HD voice technology.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Simple network configuration updates or adding a specialized router capable of VoIP traffic shaping may dramatically increase the call quality on your network.

# STANDARDS-BASED TECHNOLOGY

## IS THE OFFERING COMPATIBLE WITH INDUSTRY STANDARDS?

### TO-DO:

- Research if a vendor's service is a home-grown, custom-developed proprietary service or a standards-based solution

You may think that the concept of “standards-based” technology is of importance only to the people who build the technology, but it also has implications for you as a business owner or operator.

The largest expense you will incur when selecting a cloud-based business phone provider will be the cost of the phones. If you choose a provider that offers proprietary VoIP phones, you will only be able to use those phones with that specific provider or another provider who happens to support that brand.

Proprietary cloud-based business phone services limit your options and lock you into a system that may not be compatible with industry standards. If the provider goes out of business and you are locked into their customer proprietary system, it is very difficult and costly to switch to a standards-based offering. Look for a service provider that offers standards-based VoIP phones, specifically, one that offers SIP-based hardware.

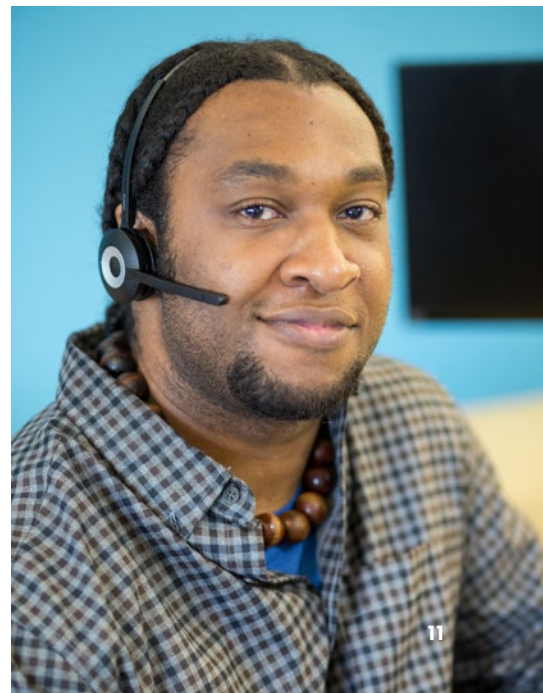
*Polycom VoIP phones are SIP-based and considered some of the best in the industry. Versature offers clients on a 3 or 5 year term free Polycom phone rentals.*

*Learn more about our “Free Phones” program at [versature.com/free-phones](https://www.versature.com/free-phones)*

# EXPERIENCE THE VERSATURE DIFFERENCE

Versature is the leader in Canadian SaaS-based business phone and communication solutions. Trusted by clients and partners across the country, Versature is an award-winning company that is raising the bar with the highest quality phone systems, superior Communications as a Service, operational system integrations, and Canadian-based technical support. Founded in 2003, Versature has a rapidly growing subscriber base and strong partner network from coast to coast.

For more information about Versature visit [versature.com](http://versature.com) or call (855) 261-0503.





**V E R S A T U R E**

Business phone service. Evolved.

**VERSATURE.COM**  
**(855) 261-0503**