



Business continuity in the new world of work

How cloud telephony solutions can be the foundation to bridge distributed teams

Simplify Communication

'Business continuity
at home?
- No problem!'

cloudya

The easy, independent and reliable

cloud telephone system from NFON





When employees work from home, good accessibility, easy-to-use communication tools and a reliable infrastructure are important factors for successful collaboration. The key is having the infrastructure to enable this – which is why the need for cloud telephony has never been greater.

The world of work has changed forever. Hybrid working is the new normal for many businesses as more major employers talk about a permanent shift to work from home and reduced office space. Barclays CEO Jes Staley said crowded corporate offices with thousands of employees “may be a thing of the past.” Matt Mullenweg, chief executive of WordPress, also outlined: “Millions of people will get the chance to experience days without long commutes, or the harsh inflexibility of not being able to stay close to home when a family member is sick... This might be a chance for a great reset in terms of how we work.”

However, many organisations are encountering technical difficulties with business continuity and employee communications. There were around 5.8 million small businesses in the UK in 2019, many of which did not have the same level of remote working readiness as their corporate counterparts and were inordinately financially impacted by the lockdown.

Many public sector bodies initially struggled with the home working boom. Here, the failures of the past years and decades are all too evident. According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019, where the European Commission assessed the degree of digitisation in the economy and society of the EU member states, the UK doesn't even figure in the top three.

According to DESI figures, less than 10 percent of households in the UK are connected to a fast FTTP (Fibre To The Premises) fibre optic network. In contrast, the European average is already 30 percent. In pioneering countries such as Lithuania, Estonia and Sweden, the share of households supplied with FTTP connections is already over 70 percent.

Challenges of home working

If an employee has poor connectivity at home then it usually means that they will have to compromise on voice, data and video transmission. Poor sound and image quality, dropouts and high latency will be constant frustrations. When choosing a communication solution, it is therefore important that they choose one that can deliver good quality, even at low bandwidths.

However, small and medium-sized companies, in particular, still rely on traditional telecommunications systems, into which home workstations or even smartphones cannot be integrated. They rely on forwarding from the office telecoms system. Employees are expected to activate the forwarding function of their office telephone. If they forget to do this, telephone calls go nowhere or end up on an answering machine that cannot be listened to remotely. Even if the forwarding has been set up correctly, important functions of the telephone system, such as call back, on busy, on hold or three-party conferences are usually lost, as they are only available via the manufacturer's own system telephones.

The worker has to flip between taking forwarded calls from the office phone to making calls on their personal

mobile. In addition, the employee cannot tell whether colleagues are on the phone, which means valuable working time is lost on unnecessary contact attempts. Traditional call forwarding can also have negative financial effects. Depending on the tariff, many contracts involve additional charges if calls are forwarded to a smartphone and thus to the mobile network - a cost factor that can be significant over time.

Another challenge is added when support or call centre employees need to access advanced functions such as queue management, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) or automated workflows from home. In most cases, these functions are not available via traditional call forwarding. The user just doesn't have access to the likes of CTI (Computer Telephony Integration) or Unified Communications (UC). For example, users can set up a telephone call directly from CRM (Customer Relationship Management) solutions by clicking on a contact's number, instead of having to enter the number manually into the telephone. Equally, when a customer calls, their contact history is automatically displayed on the PC in the CRM program as soon as the phone rings.





Cloud communications systems are completely device-independent. Employees only need a softphone on their PC or notebook, or an app for their smartphone and tablet. All performance features are available at any time, regardless of location and device, via any standard Internet connection. This also applies to CTI, UC and special functions required by sales, call centre or support staff. This enabled one hundred percent business continuity. Employees can easily maintain communication with colleagues, customers and business partners wherever they are, without long preparations - just as if they were in the office.

Telephony solutions from the cloud are usually also compatible with an extensive range of IP-capable desktop devices. These can range from simple desk telephones to comprehensive communication solutions for reception, switchboard, conference rooms or contact centres. Headsets can also be easily used, regardless of whether they are connected directly to the computer via cable or Bluetooth or used in combination with a telephone. Even analogue or ISDN telephones can be integrated into cloud telecommunications systems via adapters.

Simple administration in the cloud

There are several limitations with on-premise legacy PBX telecoms systems. The devices are usually located in the basement or server room of the office building. In the event of hardware or functional problems that cannot be solved by remote maintenance, an employee must travel to the company headquarters to fix the fault. This may involve additional risks for the person concerned. Telephone and fax communication may even fail completely until someone is able to restore the system's functionality by restarting or repairing it.

Many companies also lack the personnel and technical know-how that are necessary to configure and maintain the PBX or to repair major faults. To set up home workstations, or to make the system functional again after a failure, the help of an IT and TC service provider is usually required. However, long reaction and waiting times are not unusual. In the meantime, employees cannot access the telephone system, orders and customers are lost.

A cloud-based PBX, if designed redundantly and with high availability, is much less susceptible to failures. All functions can be set up and managed via a standard Internet browser. Central administration is easy to do, and most functions can be configured independently with self-service functionality . The changeover to cloud telephony involves very little administrative effort due to being plug-and-play. The first step is to create a customer account and log in as administrator. Your own telephone system in the cloud can then be configured with a few clicks. The provider or its service partner takes care of technical details, such as number porting or hardware issues.

Collaboration tools and cloud telephony: The best of both worlds

Collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams have shown how valuable it is for team members to be able to come together in a virtual workspace. Even though many collaboration tools offer call functions, they have numerous limitations. For example, Microsoft Teams does not offer integration with company-wide contact lists and telephone directories. Automatic name resolution is therefore only available for contacts that are stored in Microsoft Teams. Redirection options are also severely limited, and there is no source-based call forwarding. The integration of analogue terminals, such as fax, desk telephones or cordless telephones based on DECT is just as impossible in teams as that of an intercom system.

Cloud telecommunication systems also offer considerably more convenience. For example, the user can usually define the DND function for each device and thus determine which device should ring when a call comes in and which should remain silent. Several options are also usually available for call forwarding. Some, like Cloudya from NFON, also offer integration with Microsoft teams, so that companies can use a single, familiar communications platform.



What you should consider when choosing a cloud-based telephone solution.

Not every cloud telephony solution meets all the requirements of the modern mobile workplaces. Therefore, companies should be careful when making their choice and especially consider the following aspects:

- › **Flexibility:** Extensions can be quickly and easily added, or cancelled at the touch of a button.
- › **Mobile integration:** Fixed-mobile integration makes it possible to start a call on the office phone in the fixed network and continue it seamlessly on the mobile device in the mobile network - and vice versa.
- › **Unrestricted accessibility:** A uniform telephone number for all terminals is also an essential feature of a good cloud-based telephone system. Different communication profiles also means that the user can adapt the communication functions to the respective environment. In office mode, for example, they can set up the system so that when a call comes in, only the desk phone rings first and the call is only displayed on the smartphone after 30 seconds. In travel mode, only the smartphone rings and in meeting mode all calls are routed directly to the mailbox etc.
- › **Free choice of the end device:** The PBX system should support the widest possible range of telephones, from softphones to IP desk telephones to wireless and wired headsets.
- › **Low bandwidth requirements:** The cloud communication solution of choice should use data sparingly and use efficient codecs to keep the additional load as low as possible.
- › **Voice quality:** IP telephony enables a significantly better voice quality than is possible in analogue or ISDN networks. The cloud telecommunications system should therefore support HD Voice in order to really be able to use this advantage.
- › **Security and data protection:** In telephone conversations, business-critical information or personal data is often exchanged. It must therefore be ensured that the cloud telecommunications system complies with legal regulations such as the basic data protection regulation (EU-DSGVO).
- › **Billing:** Billing should clearly list all costs by extension and any additional functions booked. The pricing model should be transparent and clearly understandable.
- › **Scalability and availability:** When the load increases dynamically, the performance of the cloud PBX is a key criterion. The data centres where the systems are hosted should therefore be scalable, highly available and georedundant.

› **Simple administration:** Small and medium-sized companies in particular benefit from a clear and user-friendly administration of the cloud telecommunications system via a simple web interface.

› **Integration in Collaboration Tools:** The cloud telephony system should integrate seamlessly with collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams. This way users can use all the features of both platforms. The combination of collaboration and cloud-based communication solutions is also an essential component of business continuity.

› **Fail-safe:** In on-premise systems, technical problems of the PBX can lead to a complete failure of the communication. Users are then often unavailable for hours or even days. Cloud solutions, on the other hand, can offer high system stability and ensure uninterrupted telephony functions, even in the event of a fault, thanks to a redundant and geographically distributed server configuration. However, a prerequisite for this is that the cloud provider should guarantee high availability of at least 99 percent.



Conclusion

Conventional PBXs cannot keep up with the needs of a disperse workforce. Traditional systems usually only offer simple call forwarding; advanced functions or even integration in collaboration and UC environments are not available. Cloud-based PBXs, on the other hand, are location-independent. They allow full access to all features, regardless of whether the employee is in the office, at home or on the road. Thus, business continuity is guaranteed. When choosing a communications solution, for today and the future, cloud telephony ticks all the boxes. When choosing a provider be sure to pay attention to performance, security and simple administration, so that you can provide users with efficient and convenient communication tools in every situation. See below for reasons why businesses across the UK and Europe are choosing Cloudya, NFON's cloud telephone system.

The advantages of Cloudya, the cloud telephone system from NFON

- › **Guaranteed contact:** Employees can be reached on all devices under a single phone number, regardless of whether they are in the office, traveling or at home. Business continuity is 100 percent assured even in times of crisis.
- › **Low bandwidth requirements and high voice quality:** NFON uses efficient codecs for voice transmission. HD telephony requires just 64 kBit/s bandwidth.
- › **Device freedom:** Whether you want to make calls via web interface on the PC, via app on the smartphone, via an IP phone, analogue desk phones, cordless DECT devices, wired or Bluetooth headsets - with Cloudya you have complete freedom of choice.
- › **Complete PBX replacement:** Cloudya offers you all the necessary features of a PBX system - from voicemail to queuing functionality
- › **Maintenance-free:** Your telephone system in the cloud is centrally maintained. You don't need to worry about hardware updates, software patches or operating system updates.
- › **Barrier-free communication:** Conferences are quick and easy to set up, faxes appear directly in the browser and can therefore be received and edited at home.
- › **Flexible call handling:** Call forwarding and transfer can be easily configured. If the number of the caller is recognised, you can even create individual profiles for call handling.
- › **Integration with Microsoft Teams:** Cloudya can be easily integrated with Microsoft Teams. This allows you to use all the features of a powerful PBX from the familiar Microsoft Teams environment. Instead of a call forwarding option, for example, the user has nine additional call forwarding profiles available for specific scenarios - such as holidays, business trips, meetings or similar. The integration makes it possible to make all calls from within Teams, to accept calls with different terminals, to define number blocks, to use voicemail outside the Teams app or to use IVR functions. Even faxes can be sent and received from within Teams.
- › **Reliability:** Cloudya is geo-redundantly hosted in distributed data centres. NFON can therefore guarantee an annual availability of 99.9 percent for your telephone system.
- › **Data protection and security:** Encryption and data storage in German data centres guarantees compliance with data protection regulations.
- › **Europe-wide availability:** Cloudya is available in 15 European countries.
- › **Clear billing:** You will find all services clearly itemised by extension on your monthly bill.

About NFON AG.

Headquartered in Munich, NFON AG is a European provider of voice-centric business communications from the cloud, present in 15 European countries. NFON enables businesses to make considerable savings while streamlining their communications and delivers true added value through a phenomenal range of 160 high-end functions. NFON's service includes connectivity to and from the PSTN, using standard UK DID numbers and with access to the emergency services – all delivered via the cloud.

Its system offers easy rollout, increased control, free automatic updates for life, built-in business continuity, and a scalable pay-as-you-grow model to provide flexibility for businesses in all sectors.



Quality "Made in Germany"



Best Price Performance Ratio



Maximum Flexibility



Functional Variety



Easy Handling



Local Partner Network

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 nfon.com

The NFON Cloud Telephone service and access to Emergency Services (999,112) will not be available during any power cuts and network outages affecting the Customer.

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