

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several modern skyscrapers with glass facades. The buildings are illuminated from within, and the sky is a deep blue. The perspective creates a sense of height and scale.

A BUYER'S GUIDE

Migrating to cloud communications platforms



Welcome

If you have heard about cloud communications, then you know that this model is the future of business communication. Not only are landline phones no longer needed, but physical handsets are almost a thing of the past.

Today, people are speaking via video calls directly through their laptops or tablets, via a headset or are taking phone calls on their smartwatch while at a café. The traditional image of an office worker sitting at a designated desk has been replaced by the dynamic worker taking a conference call from home, seamlessly transitioning calls to their mobile in the car or instant messaging with their whole team while waiting for a meeting to commence.

Given technological advances over the last decade, today's business communication should be a seamless and integrated experience across the entire business, where employees can choose how they prefer to communicate. Voice call, video call, team chat and instant messaging should all be available within one platform and switchable within a second. Staff should be able to create virtual private or public chat rooms, share documents and discuss anything with their team with ease.

For businesses with contact centres, these should be integrated as well, to allow for communication ease along with management reporting and easy tracking. Far from being scary, cloud communications technology that enables all of that and more is not just available, it is easy to adopt and use, flexible and scalable. In addition, it can continuously grow and adapt as both the communication landscape and business requirements evolve.

From small businesses with basic communication needs to global organisations with enterprise communication requirements, cloud communication is now the 'go-to' option for most. And chances are, it is the best option for your business as well.

This guide will explain the benefits of cloud communication systems, help you assess whether they are the best solution for your business and outline how to go about selecting the right provider.



What is a cloud communication platform?

It's effectively a license sitting in the cloud!

SaaS (or cloud) communication platforms, offered on a subscription basis, have revolutionised the business communications market. It means that your communications platform is a set of licenses in the cloud, instead of a system in a cupboard that handcuffs you to a carrier.

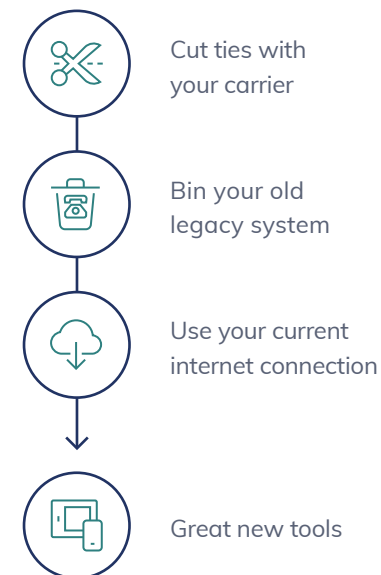
Migrating to the cloud for communication means businesses pay a monthly subscription for relevant licensing and limited carriage – and that's it! The only hardware clients have on-site could be a portable headset rather than a static handset.

Voice over IP (VoIP) technology has been a critical factor concerning the rise of cloud communication platforms.

It means voice traffic can be delivered via your current ISP, but can also offer a range of business-critical benefits and advanced features, all while being more accessible and affordable.

Cloud communication solutions can help businesses transform their customer and employee experience. With one system of engagement for voice, video, collaboration and contact centre and one system of intelligence on one technology platform, businesses can communicate faster and smarter to exceed the speed of customer expectations.

By combining the cost and efficiency benefits of VoIP with the capabilities of traditional PBX solutions and the ability to unify multiple communication methods, leading cloud communication solutions can provide powerful functions and are often more cost-effective.





What is the difference between cloud and hosted communication systems?

For many years, most businesses relied on traditional hosted communication systems which required complex on-site hardware and maintenance. Modern cloud communication systems offer many benefits over these legacy hosted solutions.

	True cloud communication systems	Hosted communication systems
Software updates	Included as part of license subscription.	Usually, additional charges apply for upgrades to your system in addition to the software support fees for the vendor software maintenance.
Support	Included as part of license subscription.	Additional charges usually apply for support.
Phone lines	Usually included as part of the license subscription. Additional call charges may apply depending on the specific license inclusions.	An additional carrier is required on top of the hosted system. For example, you may have your system hosted with "MSP X", but your phone lines billed with Telstra or Optus.
Flexible licensing	A true cloud platform can grow and contract as you need, with no minimum spend requirements.	Hosted systems will typically include an underlying base system cost (minimum spend) with additions as you expand. Subtractions are generally not available.
Hardware	No complex on-site equipment to deal with.	Hardware is installed on-site or in a data centre and needs to be maintained.



What are the benefits of cloud communication platforms?

Reduced cost

Cloud communication platforms are often less expensive than traditional on-premises phone solutions – a critical factor in today's competitive business landscape where every cent counts. As new cloud services arrive, costs will likely reduce further over the next 5-10 years.

Easy to change providers in the future

Pre-2017 it was typical to have a premise-based solution for 7-15 years. The arrival of cloud means a cloud hopping behaviour will emerge where clients can chase new benefits or lower costs every 3-5 years. That means your decision to go cloud is not so scary!

No more on-site hardware hassles

As the name suggests, cloud phone systems are hosted in the cloud, removing the need for complex on-site hardware and the hassle of dealing with them.

Work from anywhere

Cloud communication systems remove the traditional requirement to be present in an office to work. Now, employees and managers can work anytime, anywhere – all they need is an internet connection.

Seamless integrations

Most leading cloud telephony solutions will offer either out of the box or easy to configure integrations or plugins for leading software productivity applications like Microsoft Outlook and Office365, and G-Suite for emailing and click-to-dial. Many also offer direct integration with most leading CRMs like Netsuite, Salesforce, Salesforce Lightning, Bullhorn, MS Dynamic 365 and others, as well as APIs for custom integration.

Everything in one place

Access everything in one place: phone, messaging, chat, meetings and contact centre, thereby enhancing customer and employee interaction, increasing productivity and reducing costs.

Increased security & reliability

While some businesses are concerned about reliability and security, both are proven to be better with cloud systems when compared to on-premise communication solutions, mainly because redundancy is usually included with the licensing fee. Some cloud solutions offer 99.99% uptime and encrypted communication.

Advanced features

Cloud communication platforms offer advanced features like HD video calling, the ability to stream live video as a private or public YouTube stream, team collaboration with a simple button click, and enhanced collaboration via virtual rooms IM. There is also the ability to deploy remote offices anywhere in the world and to work from anywhere using a softphone, mobile or physical handset.

Easy to Manage

Cloud communication systems are easy to manage and don't require a certified engineer for day to day administration.

Built to stay ahead

Latest software updates and new features are usually pushed via automatic updates directly in the backend with no, or very minimal, impact for the end-user. No more scheduled on-site outages due to on-premise hardware or firmware upgrades.



TIP!

As an expert in cloud platform, Syndeticom can run through the specific benefits that apply to your business.



Is a cloud communication platform right for our business?

The benefits of cloud communication platforms are compelling, and many small and large companies have achieved significant operational efficiencies since taking their communication to the cloud. However, it is not always the right solution for all businesses.

To assess whether a cloud communication solution might be the right option for your business, consider the following questions.



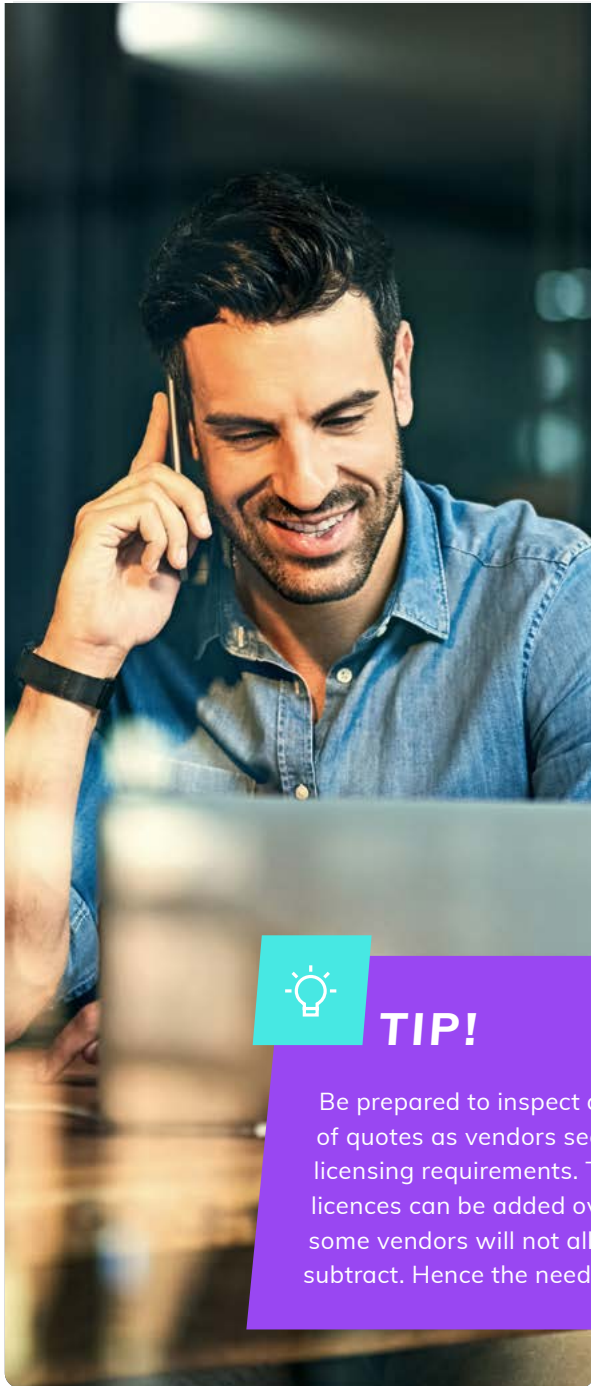
TIP!

Take these questions to your team to make sure you fully understand how they are currently communicating, how they use the available technology and how they would like to be able to communicate to be more productive.

	YES	NO
1. Do many of your people make and receive a large number of phone calls throughout the day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you use (or want to use) multiple communication channels in addition to phone (chat, audio & video conferencing and collaboration, and more)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do some of your people work remotely and need to communicate while on the go?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you pay a high maintenance fee on old phone hardware?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are you or your people based in locations with reliable and consistent internet access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Would your business benefit from integrating your communication system with other apps like your CRM, analytics and more?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do your people need access to advanced unified communication features such as HD video conferencing and team collaboration and seamless handover of calls between desk phones and mobile phones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Is yours an innovative business that wants to make sure your communication solution is up-to-date with the latest trends and developments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you NOT want to be handcuffed to the same solution for 7-10 years, paying the same high costs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



If you answered yes to most of these questions, there is a good chance that a cloud communication platform would be an excellent option for your business.



TIP!

Be prepared to inspect a few iterations of quotes as vendors seek to meet your licensing requirements. They do this knowing licences can be added over time. However, some vendors will not allow clients to subtract. Hence the need for accuracy.

When is the right time to migrate to a cloud communication platform?

Let's assume you have decided that yours is one of the many businesses that would benefit from migrating to a cloud communication solution. The next question you have to ask yourself is 'When?'.

The right time to migrate ultimately depends on you, your people and your business. However, there are a few circumstances in which a migration might be easier or more beneficial. They include the following:

- ✓ The lease on your current communication system is coming up for renewal
- ✓ You are relocating or expanding, or are for other reasons fitting out a new office space
- ✓ You are experiencing performance issues with your current system
- ✓ Switching to a cloud communication platform would lead to significant cost savings
- ✓ A new communications system would deliver functionalities that your current system can't deliver.



How do I select the right provider?

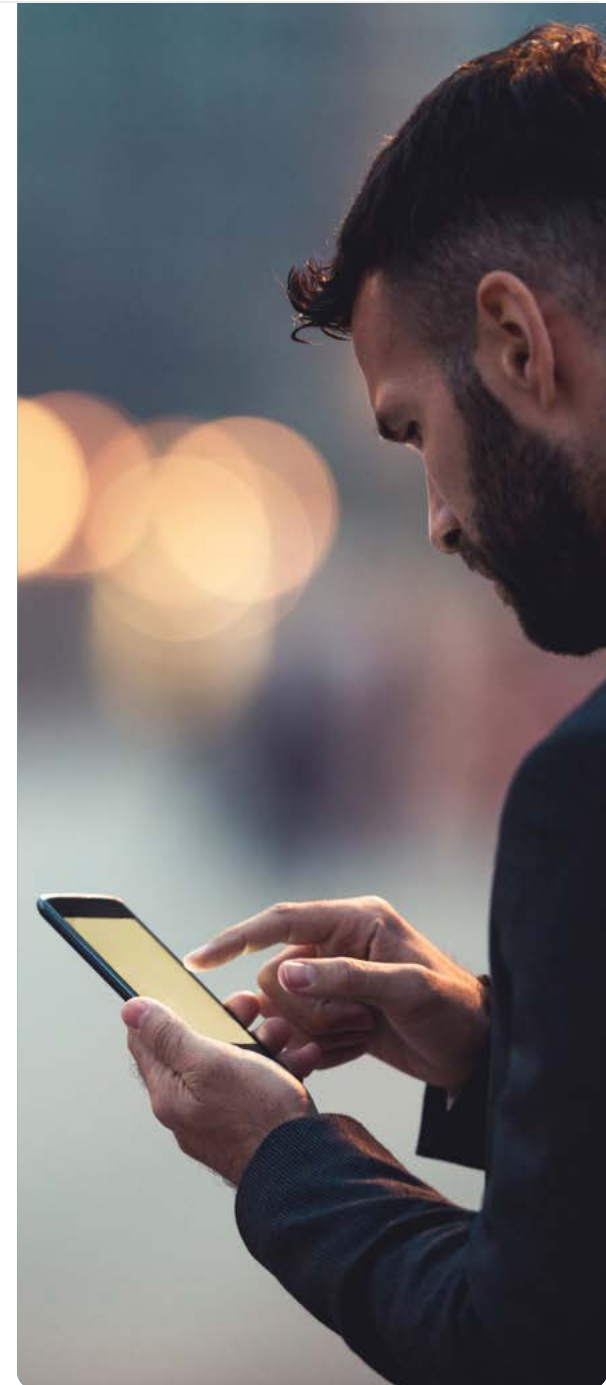
When you select a cloud communication platform provider, you could be choosing a long-term business partner.

With cloud communication platforms becoming increasingly popular, there is a growing number of products, vendors and suppliers offering a range of different services and solutions – and not all of them are right for your business. Selecting a provider is quite possibly the most critical decision when it comes to migrating to the cloud and can easily make or break the project.

Understand your requirements first

An essential first step in selecting the right supplier is making sure a supplier is willing to assist your company in identifying and demonstrating all of your requirements. A responsible partner will then document requirements and system features you require back to you in writing in the form of an indicative proposal. Working through the steps on the right will help you get that clarity.

- 1 Think about, and write down, what you think your requirements for a communication system are.
- 2 Talk to your team to understand how they are using different communication methods as part of their jobs and which additional features would be beneficial to them.
- 3 Research the different communication solutions and the features and benefits they offer, so you know what's possible.
- 4 Consider how your communication platform fits in with your other IT systems – especially if integrations are important to you.
- 5 Finally, make sure you document your requirements in a format you can share with potential suppliers. This will ensure providers understand your basic needs, can recommend the right solutions and provide accurate quotes.





TIP!

Engaging suppliers early on in the process can help you better scope your requirements, understand the benefits you'll see and ensure your solution is fit-for-purpose.

Once you have documented your requirements, it's time to reach out to suppliers. Engaging with potential suppliers can be a time-consuming process, so it helps to narrow down the list quickly.

Therefore, decision-makers must know what to look for and how to evaluate and compare different suppliers. Follow the checklist below to make sure you're choosing the right partner.



Make sure the provider is experienced in delivering cloud communication solutions in your region.



Ask suppliers for names of customers and references to get some first-hand feedback on what it's like to work with them.



Make sure the people you're dealing with are trustworthy, knowledgeable and communicate well (slow replies and unclear communications are a big red flag!)



Make sure you vet not only the supplier but also the product(s) they are recommending. Make sure they are proven and get positive reviews from users.



Summary

Communication is the cornerstone of almost any business. Whether team members need to communicate with each other or with suppliers, partners and customers, without an efficient and reliable communications platform, most companies wouldn't be able to achieve their goals.

At the same time, the communications landscape is changing faster than ever as new channels and technologies emerge – and it will continue to do so. Customers, partners, suppliers and staff will expect businesses to keep up with these trends to make sure communication is as effortless as possible and does not become a bottleneck.

As a result, businesses can no longer afford to choose a communications solution purely based on what is the best today. Instead, they need to adopt a communications platform that will continue to evolve and improve as new technologies and channels emerge.

Cloud communications systems are ideally suited for this. Leading platforms are built with innovation in mind and are improving and evolving all the time. That, in addition to their cost-effectiveness, high reliability and security, feature-richness, ease of adoption and the efficiency around unifying different communication channels in one place, make cloud communication platforms the solution of choice for many small and large businesses.



Talk to us to learn more

At Syndeticom, we have been delivering mission-critical digital infrastructure since 1992.

Cloud communication platforms are one of our areas of expertise. We work with world-class solutions provider 8x8, who are the trusted provider of secure and reliable cloud communications solutions to more than 40,000 businesses operating in over 100 countries across six continents.

In other words, we have the experience and the product to deliver the best-of-class communication solutions you need. Get in touch with us today to learn more and discuss your requirements.

GET IN TOUCH



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