

WHITEPAPER

AVOID BUYER'S REMORSE
WHEN PURCHASING HOSTED VOIP

OVERVIEW ◀

With hosted voice adoption rapidly on the rise, there are a lot of providers—many of them relatively new—looking to cash in. Are they reliable? Will they be around long-term?

In order to avoid buyer's remorse and choose the best Hosted VoIP service (and provider) for your company, it's important to educate yourself about hosted voice services and what separates top providers from the rest. After all, choppy or dropped calls have a direct impact on your customers' experience and therefore your professional image, so choosing a subpar provider could be a tremendous business risk. In this paper, you'll find tips for separating the good from the bad.

LEARN THE BASICS OF HOSTED VOIP ◀

Avoid surprises by familiarizing yourself with Hosted VoIP.

Although you don't have to become an expert, understanding the basics will help you skim past the hype and inform your selection. For example, successful Hosted VoIP implementation depends on more than simply the voice service itself. Hosted VoIP services are underpinned by the Local Area Network (LAN) and the broadband connection. Each technology plays a critical role in delivering a high-quality experience. If something is wrong with just one of the components (your LAN, for example) calls can become choppy, sound jittery or—worse—drop altogether.

EVALUATE THE PROVIDER'S VOICE NETWORK RELIABILITY ◀

Most providers deliver their IP-based phone service on a “best effort” basis.

In the event of an outage, your voice system could go down, putting you out of touch with colleagues, customers, and business partners for an hour, a day, a week, or even longer. Sales all but stop, and customer service shuts down. An outage of any length can be hugely detrimental to the bottom line and your brand reputation in today's competitive, social media saturated world. Some providers may not offer service availability guarantees, but MegaPath does. And our voice network consistently achieves 99.999 percent availability, providing customers with the highest level of reliability in the industry.

LOOK FOR YEARS AND DEPTH OF EXPERIENCE

Certain providers may not guarantee call quality, either. However, MegaPath Hosted Voice is offered as a fully integrated Voice and Data solution that guarantees Quality of Service (QoS).

Experience matters when it comes to service. Also important: the reliability and long-term staying power of any provider you deal with.

- > **Longevity.** New entrants in the Hosted VoIP space may or may not be around a month, a year, or ten years from now. Do you want to risk losing your provider and potentially having to switch? Be sure you deal with an experienced, or profitable, or well-funded vendor that will be around for the long haul and who can support you as you grow and scale. Although longevity is no guarantee of future success, seasoned service providers typically offer a solid, well-developed, and time-tested VoIP system infrastructure upon which your company can grow. MegaPath was one of the first VoIP providers and has been in the business since 1996.
- > **Awards.** Industry awards indicate a company's technical and customer service acumen and the maturity of its voice services. MegaPath has a shelf full of awards. Our Hosted Voice and Unified Communications services consistently recognized by industry experts year after year.

THE BETTER CHOICE

Although you may be looking primarily for a VoIP provider, consider evaluating providers that offer more than VoIP.

Why? For one thing, it's simpler to work with a single vendor for multiple services such as voice, broadband access, secure private networking, and cloud service. MegaPath is one provider that offers a diverse product portfolio that includes business-class broadband access, private networking, data and network security, and cloud services.

- > **One vendor, multiple services.** Receiving one bill and making just one call for support for several services across all your locations can dramatically simplify vendor oversight and bill reconciliation and payment, and can reduce overhead costs. Also, as mentioned earlier, your VoIP system relies on a broadband connection and your local LAN. When you work with a single vendor who can provide technologies, expertise, and support in these areas as well as voice, chances are you'll have a noticeably better experience.
- > **Service guarantees.** Some providers go so far as to guarantee your voice calling experience if you subscribe to selected circuits from the same vendor. This is the case with MegaPath.



THE BETTER CHOICE

The technology is only part of the voice solution. The other part is the personal service you receive from the provider.

- > **Installation.** Many providers require that customers install voice services themselves. MegaPath, in contrast, offers both self-installation and professional installation, so you can choose the one that fits your needs. With our self-installation, we'll ship pre-configured phones directly to users, but we don't leave you to tackle everything alone. We assign a voice implementation project manager to oversee the entire process.

“We're spread across the country, but we still want to function like a single office. To do so, we depend upon a high quality, reliable voice and data network. Since we signed up with MegaPath we haven't had to deal with dropped calls or lost business due to outages, and our data connection is faster than we've ever had. MegaPath's network solutions and service are as close to flawless as anyone could ever expect.”

Torey Apuzzio
Production Director, PTC Productions

Customers that don't want to perform the installation themselves can opt for a professional installation complete with an onsite technician. Both options deliver a smooth and low-stress implementation.

- > **Self-service.** Easy, convenient self-service is becoming the norm, but some providers lag behind, with customer portals that offer only limited capabilities such as managing administrator/user configuration and paying bills. MegaPath offers a robust customer portal with a range of self-service options that keep you in control of your account. You or an administrator can handle billing, administer users, obtain support, and even purchase and manage services—online, anytime.
- > **Customer Support.** Technical support also varies from one provider to the next. Hours of operation and support levels directly contribute to the experience you (and your users) have. With some providers, access to premium support may incur an extra charge if you have less than a certain number of seats, for example. If a Voice provider you're considering claims to provide US-based support, ask your rep to review the support clause in the contract with you before you sign it, because they may offer US-based support only during certain hours and/or to a certain sub-set of customers, for example those who have purchased a minimum number of seats.

MegaPath's Voice Support is 100% US-based and available 24/7/365 to every customers, whether you purchased one seat or one thousand.

- > **Training.** Your users shouldn't struggle with their phone, and your administrators need to know how to manage services and features. Be sure to ask providers if they offer training. MegaPath includes free customizable user and administrator training to help employees get the most out of Hosted Voice. A wealth of self-paced learning resources are available in our online Voice Learning Center, which is geared for users and voice administrators.

NEXT STEPS

In this day and age, there's no reason to settle for second best. MegaPath offers affordable, award-winning VoIP services to businesses of all sizes, nationwide.

If you're looking for more guidance on choosing a Hosted VoIP service from a reliable, experienced provider that has your best interest in mind, visit www.megapath.com/voice/hosted to learn more, or contact a MegaPath Business Consultant today at **877-611-6342**.