

System IT Board Report

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Cloud Telephony

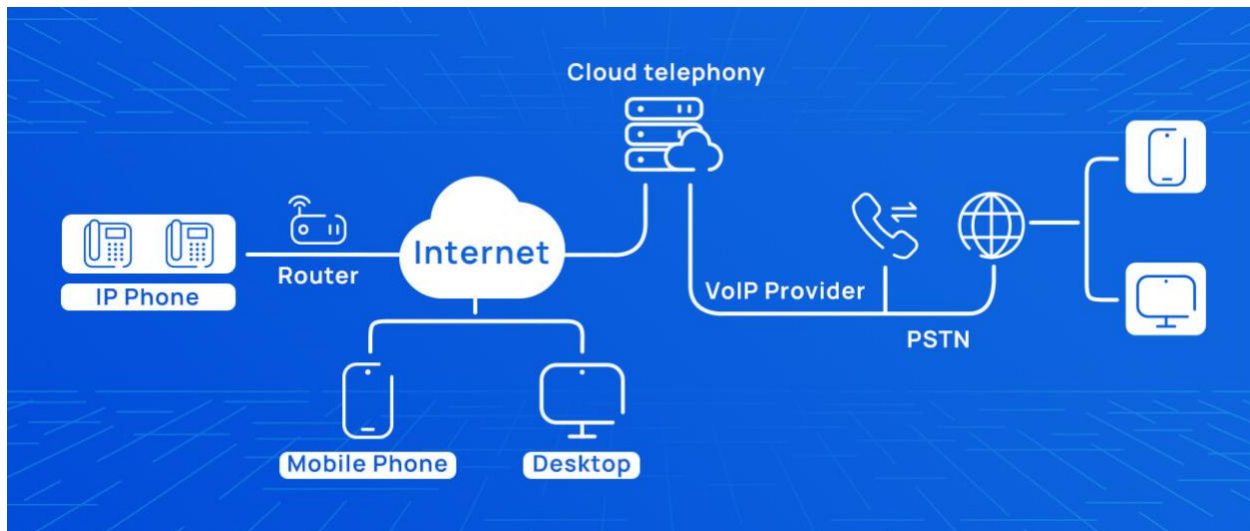
Introduction

Cloud telephony uses Voice over IP (VoIP) to make phone calls by connecting your voice call to the Internet. Cloud telephony allows you to make outbound calls and receive inbound calls from Internet-connected devices. It is a voice service that eliminates the need for expensive, on-premise telephone hardware, such as PBX (Private Branch Exchange) appliances.

How it works

Cloud communications are Internet-based voice and video communications where the telecommunications applications are hosted by a third-party outside of the organization and are accessed over the public Internet. Cloud services is a broad term, referring primarily to cloud data-center-hosted services that are run and accessed over an Internet infrastructure. Until recently, these services have been data-centric, but with the evolution of VoIP (voice over Internet protocol), voice has become part of the cloud phenomenon. Cloud telephony (also known as Cloud Calling) refers specifically to voice services and more specifically the replacement of conventional business telephone equipment, such as a private branch exchange (PBX), with a third-party VoIP service.

Cloud communications providers deliver voice and video communication applications and services, hosting them on servers that the providers own and maintain, giving their customers access to the “cloud.” Because they only pay for services or applications they use, customers have a more cost-effective, reliable and secure communications environment, without the headaches associated with more conventional PBX system deployment.



Benefits

Companies can cut costs with cloud communications services without sacrificing features. The success of Cisco and others as cloud-based providers has demonstrated that a cloud-based platform can be just as effective as an on-premise, hardware-based platform, but at a much lower cost. Voice services delivered from the cloud increases the value of hosted telephony, as users also turn to a cloud-based offering instead of relying on a facilities-based service provider for hosted VoIP. This expands their options beyond local or regional carriers.

Cloud Calling is attractive because the cloud can now become a platform for voice, video and data. Most hosted services have been built around voice and are usually referred to as hosted VoIP. The cloud communications environment serves as a platform upon which all these modes can seamlessly work and integrate with one another. Organizations no longer need to worry about upgrading their hardware and software; instead, they just need an internet connection and a web browser to access their virtual phone system. The cost savings are also significant when switching from legacy phone systems to a cloud telephony system

Cloud Calling at CCCS

Colorado Community College System is in the beginning stages of implementing Cloud Calling throughout the system. We have partnered with Cisco Systems Webex Calling platform as our Cloud Calling provider and with Lumen Technologies as our professional services implementation team.

The move to Cloud Calling will be transparent to the user. Webex Calling uses Cisco IP desktop phones that we have in use today, as well as the softphone feature found in the Webex Teams application. Users will still have all the calling features they are used to plus additional features such as Voice Mail translation to text and enhanced e911 location detection.

After the move to Webex Calling, System Office IT staff will no longer be burdened with supporting a multi-server, on premise system spread across two Data Centers. That functionality will move to the Webex Cloud and be managed by Cisco.

The System Office and our 13 colleges will be migrated from our current on-premises Cisco Call Manager platform to Webex Calling starting in mid-October and completing by end of May 2025. Call Manager's Contact Center program is used by the schools' Call Centers typically receiving calls from students regarding registration, financial aid and other information. Call Centers use Automated Call Distribution (ACD) to route student calls to the appropriate agents depending on what type of assistance is needed. Customized greetings can be created to deliver a common greeting message. If all agents are busy or it's off-hours, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) can allow students to retrieve information from self-service systems. These features will all be included as part of the new Webex Cloud Calling platform.