



Hosted VoIP:

What IT Decision-Makers Really Think



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Introduction

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) has become the norm for IT professionals across a range of industries. It makes sense, as hosted VoIP solutions can greatly expand and improve the capabilities of a company's telecommunications systems. This is especially true for companies with legacy phone and data networks that need to consolidate, simplify, and more effectively scale to the rapidly changing needs of business.

From a recent Spiceworks survey of 250 IT decision-makers, we gained deep insights into how IT pros view hosted VoIP, as well as the challenges, benefits, and drivers of utilizing or considering a hosted VoIP solution for their organizations.

“ The need for connectivity is only growing, and our internal IT staff cannot support everything; hosted VoIP would take some of the load off.

IT professional, survey respondent

“ We always evaluate new technology. We have to keep up. Innovate whenever needed or possible.

IT professional, survey respondent

More than half (54%) of IT professionals

indicate hosted VoIP solutions will be a critical part of their organization's future business enablement strategy.



What IT Pros Think of Hosted VoIP Today... And What They Expect Tomorrow

Businesses are turning to VoIP technology to cut costs while giving employees, partners, and customers the ability to connect from anywhere, over any device. This has made VoIP solutions especially popular among industries like retail, hospitality, healthcare, and government. In fact, the Spiceworks survey shows that 59% of respondents currently use on-premises VoIP solutions, while 65% are using hosted VoIP solutions.

While VoIP has grown in popularity, the industry still has work to do in terms of satisfying the expectations of many IT pros. The survey revealed that of those using hosted VoIP solutions, only 46% were "Very Satisfied" or "Extremely Satisfied" with their current solution. Another 29% were satisfied, while 25% were either "Somewhat" or "Not at all" satisfied with their current VoIP solutions.

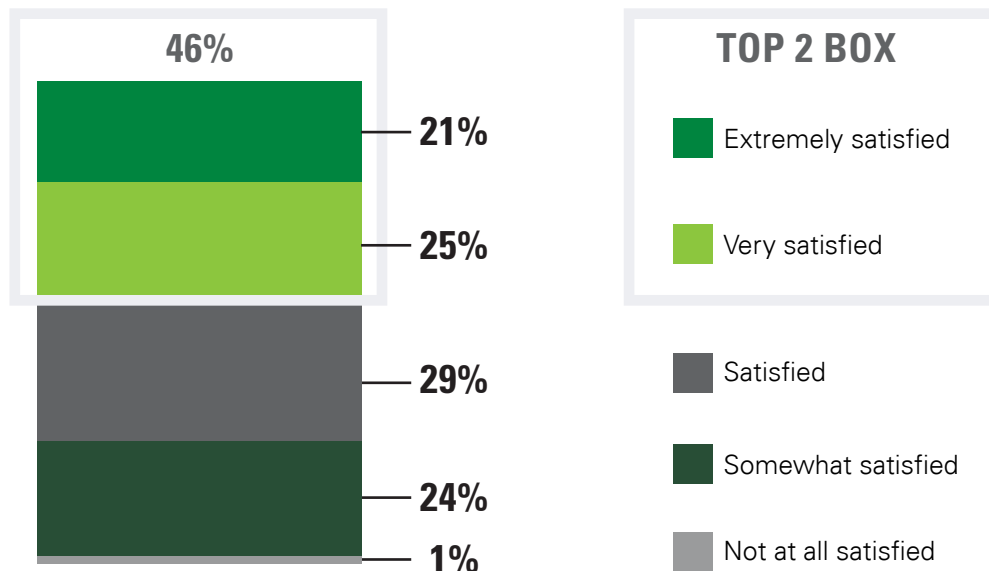
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Our business initiative is to consolidate sites into one centrally managed VOIP solution.

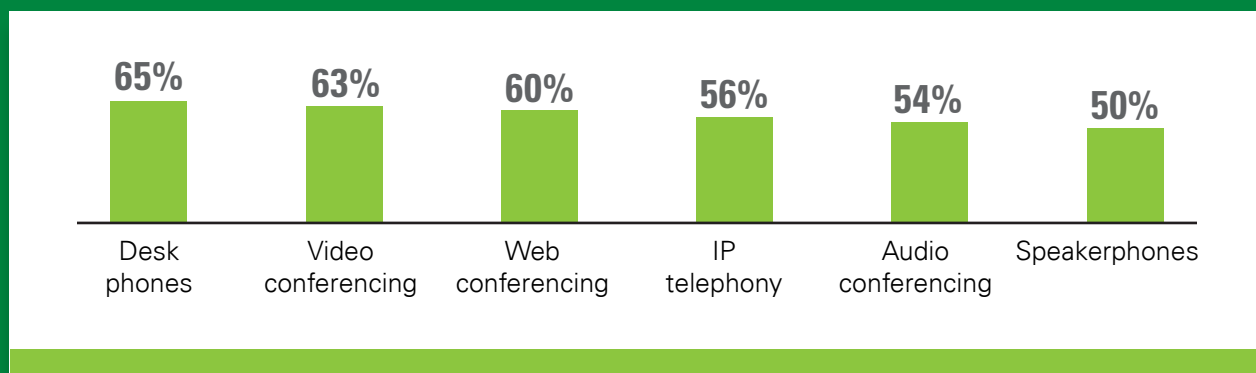
IT professional, survey respondent

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SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT HOSTED VOIP SOLUTIONS (AMONG THOSE USED HOSTED VOIP)



HOSTED VoIP APPLICATIONS CURRENTLY USED/BEING CONSIDERED:



78% of IT professionals

identified hosted VoIP reliability, quality, and security as the most critical factors when evaluating providers, more so than cost/value.



More than half (51%) of organizations considering whether to accelerate their plans for deploying hosted VoIP solutions are driven to do so by an IT initiative, rather than for other reasons.

Top 5 drivers to accelerate deployment of hosted VoIP:

1. IT initiative
2. End-user demand
3. Dedicated expertise/management resources
4. Improved interoperability/compatibility with apps
5. Rapid growth in user base

There are a variety of technologies and applications that respondents identified they're using currently or considering as part of a future hosted VoIP solution, with desk phones (65%), video conferencing (63%), and web conferencing (60%) being the top three choices.

Budget constraints (44%) and security concerns (41%) are the two biggest hurdles for companies

increasing or accelerating plans for hosted VoIP deployment. There is still a tendency to try to do more with less when it comes to networking solutions, and the issue of security continues to be one of the major concerns of IT decision makers.

Still, in spite of reservations about budgets and security, 60% of survey respondents report that they're likely to evaluate new hosted VoIP solutions in the next year in an effort to be more efficient and innovative.



We are always seeking the best innovations to allow ourselves to run as efficiently as we can.

IT professional, survey respondent





CH. 2

Exploring the Biggest Drivers, Challenges, and Opportunities of Hosted VoIP

As VoIP continues to reshape and improve business communications, many IT decision-makers view hosted VoIP as crucial to their organization’s business enablement strategy. The Spiceworks survey shows 40% consider it critical to their current business strategy, and 54% see it as critical to future business strategy.

“ Our PBX system is aging and mobile solutions were deployed by department; IT wishes to gain oversight of all solutions.

IT professional, survey respondent

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78% of IT professionals

cite their challenges (e.g., management, cost, reliability, complexity, etc.) with on-premises PBX/voice solutions as another factor that led their organization to use/consider hosted VoIP solutions.



There are a number of drivers that compel IT pros to deploy hosted VoIP solutions, from growing the business (45%) and initiating a technology refresh (44%) to having limited IT staff resources to manage on-premises PBX phones (38%).

While the survey revealed no single dominant anticipated challenge from deploying a VoIP solution, concerns about cost/ROI and security/visibility into the network each garnered response rates of almost 25%.

In spite of perceived challenges, the IT pros surveyed have experienced or plan to realize multiple benefits from a hosted VoIP solution.

Top 5 experienced or expected benefits of hosted VoIP:



1. Better performance



2. Increased reliability



3. Increased scalability



4. Cost savings (per-seat pricing, reduced long-distance charges)



5. Increased efficiency

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Hosted VoIP system makes it simple to create and deploy a wide range of telephony applications and services, including IP PBX's, VoIP gateways, call center ACDs and IVR systems.

IT professional, survey respondent

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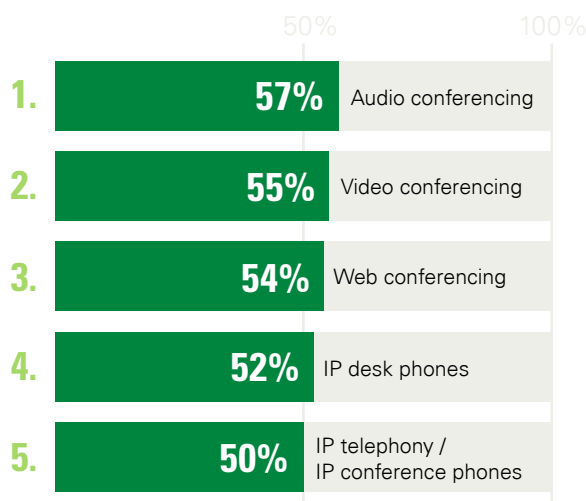




CH. 3

IT Pros Weigh In on Most Critical Hosted VoIP Features

In seriously considering a hosted VoIP solution, a number of features are viewed as crucial to success. Survey respondents identified the top 5 most critical features:



Not surprisingly, the most important factors sought from a hosted VoIP solution provider included reliability, quality, security, and cost/value.

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We are bringing all sites into our WAN and also upgrading all sites to support bandwidths for VoIP, which we did not have before at all our sites.

IT professional, survey respondent

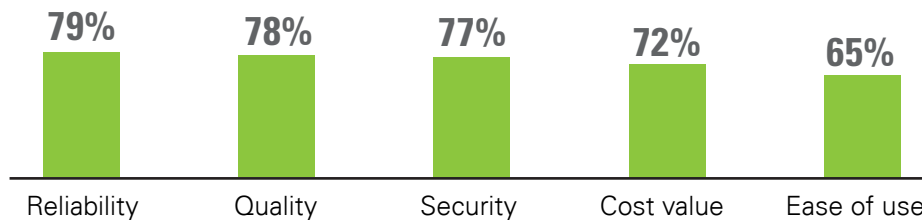
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More than half (52%) of IT pros

prefer to purchase hosted VoIP solutions as part of a networking solution (e.g., Ethernet, MPLS, SD-WAN, etc.) due to the potential cost savings and support services gained by using a single provider.



TOP CRITICALLY IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A HOSTED VoIP PROVIDER



And when it comes to actually purchasing a hosted VoIP solution, 52% of survey respondents preferred a bundled solution that included other networking solutions beyond simply VoIP, while 35% would select a standalone service.

By bundling hosted VoIP with other services, IT pros expect to reduce costs, increase savings, and realize more value from an integrated group of services.

“

I would expect more advantageous pricing on all offerings in the bundle, as well as a more seamless integration of the services in the bundle.

IT professional, survey respondent

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Conclusion

The Spiceworks survey revealed important data about how IT decision-makers view hosted VoIP services, what challenges they anticipate, and what benefits they receive and expect. The survey also identified the critical influencers driving a purchase.

Respondents were clear in their beliefs that hosted VoIP solutions will serve a vital role in current business enablement strategies, and more than half of survey participants see that role becoming even more important in years to come.

“ We’re looking to lower costs and better integrate with our current software.

IT professional, survey respondent ”

“ We need to be able to keep our communication technology up to date and take advantage of new capabilities.

IT professional, survey respondent ”

Almost 60% of IT pros

value video/web/audio conferencing a top feature of hosted VoIP.



CenturyLink is a trusted partner to growing businesses seeking to digitally transform their operations nationwide. These companies count on CenturyLink as a single source provider with deep expertise, state-of-the-industry equipment, and flexible, fully integrated IT services.

CenturyLink delivers more than three billion minutes of VoIP conversations every month over a network backbone that connects over 12,000+ rate centers across the U.S. With CenturyLink Hosted VoIP, your voice service stays on CenturyLink's network longer, enabling a higher level of voice quality, greater availability, and improved security for your business. Better yet, businesses using CenturyLink® Hosted VoIP realize an average savings of 50% to 75% because there's a reduction in the equipment to purchase or maintain.

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Get a free VoIP consultation from CenturyLink and find out how your business can reduce costs, boost performance, and improve your customers' experiences.

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About the Survey

In June 2017, Spiceworks surveyed IT decision-makers in the U.S. in an online research panel on behalf of CenturyLink. While the group of 250 participants represented a balanced range of industries, company sizes, and job titles, all had influence on VoIP purchases by their organizations.