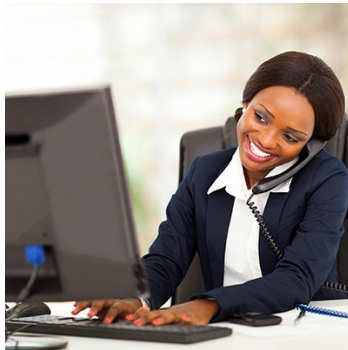




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Hosted, Managed, or On-Premises Which VoIP Phone System is Best for Your School?



VoIP is an acronym for Voice over Internet Protocol, today's standard in phone systems. Many schools are replacing their aging digital phone systems with VoIP. VoIP systems consist of a phone server and IP phones and typically run on the same network as your computers. In most implementations, the user's computer plugs into the back of their phone. In many cases, that shared infrastructure results in lower costs than traditional systems and VoIP systems offer more features and flexibility.

Today, VoIP is offered in three options: Managed, Hosted or On-Premises systems. Here's the difference:

Hosted VoIP Systems

Hosted, or cloud-based, phone systems are those in which the VoIP phone server and the IT specialists who oversee them are located offsite. Since the server itself is housed in the provider's data center, hosted systems are backed up on a second server, often times in a geographically dispersed data center, offering an attractive degree of redundancy and support.

Hosted VoIP systems are rented/leased on a "per seat" or per phone user basis and are not generally available for purchase. They are an operating expense vs capital expense. At the end of the service agreement it can be renewed and can include a technology refresh of new model phones or the buyout of amortized components, like the phones.

Additions, moves and changes are generally managed by the hosted provider and work well for schools with limited or no IT resources. System maintenance and software upgrades are performed by the provider. A downside of many hosted systems is that changes are made through the provider's service order system and may be slow, though some providers allow the customer or their representative, like us, make changes.

Managed VoIP Systems

Like the Hosted system, Managed systems are rented or leased and are an operating expense, but in this scenario, the VoIP phone servers are located on-site instead of in the provider's data center. At the end of the lease agreement, the contract is terminated or renewed with similar options as hosted. Providers include management, upgrades, and maintenance in their contract agreement.

An important characteristic of having the phone server in the school is that if the network connection is disrupted, the principal can still call the classroom and page, and most servers have ports for standard phone lines that can be used to make emergency calls.

On-Premises VoIP Systems

Premises-based VoIP systems are solutions where the phone server is installed locally at your school. The system is typically purchased but can be financed or leased with a nominal buy-out, making it a capital expense. Annual maintenance and support agreements will be required and

should be part of your financial comparison. The purchase option is usually more cost effective in the long run if you plan to own the system over 5 to 10 years.

A major benefit of the premises-based VoIP phone system is that the phone server and phones are made by the same manufacturer, software is written by the same engineer and they are designed to work together, typically offering a richer feature set as a result. We've identified a list of capabilities in the next section we think make a VoIP phone system the right choice for schools. Many hosted providers use Broadsoft software with Polycom or Yealink phones and they may not provide these important capabilities. And in contrast to placing service orders for changes with the hosted provider, modifications can often be made more quickly by your provider, or even by yourself.



The Right Phone System for your School

Schools have unique communications needs such as automated phone calling, student safety, paging, mobility features, and the ability to integrate with other education-specific software. Unified communication is an integral part of education and schools need an affordable, easy-to-use technology to enable it. The right phone system offers:

- **Emergency 911 monitoring** that can notify assigned staff via email and their desk phones when a 911 call is made, including where the emergency call was initiated, down to the exact building and room number.
- **Dual language support** that allows the caller to hear greetings and voice prompts in a preferred language.
- **Multi-site campuses** appear and operate as an integrated unit, simplifying cross-campus communication.
- **Voice mail to email** is an efficient feature that allows users to listen to voicemail messages from their computer or cell phone with recordings conveniently delivered to their email inbox.
- **Absentee calls** can be automatically answered and routed to designated staff who can receive voice mail and/or email notifications.
- **Customized call routing** allows you to choose the way calls are routed to staff or faculty member(s). Calls can ring simultaneously at one or more locations and be routed to designated phones.
- **Paging systems** can be enhanced by extending the page to the intercoms on the phones. VoIP allows your paging system to be used independently, or with the phone intercoms to assure important announcements are heard.
- **Mobile applications** turn cell phone or smart pads into virtual office phones. Conference calling from the desk phone or cell phone makes it easy to conference with parents, faculty, or administrators from anywhere.
- **Desktop call management** allows receptionists to answer and transfer calls on their desktop computer with a click of the mouse.
- **Outlook integration** allows you to include phone numbers for parents or staff in your contacts lists for easy click-to-dial.
- **On-site installation and training** is included in our IP phone system package.

NexGen has Engineers to Help You

NexGen's engineers can help you with all of your technology upgrades, provide you with multiple quotes, and provide all the information you need for your E-Rate documentation.

NexGen is a telecom and network engineering firm specializing in advanced IP voice and data, cloud services, network analysis, network optimization, wireless, and structured cabling. We create customer solutions by designing, installing, and maintaining their systems. For more information, contact Jack Bush at 847-459-1220 or jbush@sandgcom.com.



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About NexGen / S&G Communications

Our engineers provide design and implementation of IP phone systems and network services from all the leading carriers. We also offer WiFi services, cloud services, network analysis and network optimization services.

Our technicians install voice and data cabling, fiber optic cabling, racks, cabinets, under-floor tray systems, wireless access point installation, and more.

Our installers are certified, union technicians. By using quality products and certified technicians, we can provide you with an infrastructure capable of supporting all applications designed for today's standards.

Training and Service - As a provider of premier IP phone systems, we offer free on-site training and a suite of post-implementation services to help you successfully maintain your system.

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