

Hosted VoIP vs IP-PBX Mini Series-2

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Written by Matt Brunk

There are two observations that may impact decisions to not go with a hosted solution or an IP-PBX. There's a 3rd coming- but I'll leave that one to the UC Microsoft experts! Then, I'll throw in four more alternatives- Peer-to-Peer, Open Source, Centrex, and cheap key/hybrid systems. For good measure, I'll add the "Custom Hybrid" where pretty much anything goes.



OBSERVATIONS

After speaking with several distributors of an IP-PBX, they've all pretty much said that sales are hot but the licensing of key-codes for IP software options are very minimal. Customers are buying the "IP" capability for the future but not really using it today. (Safety Buying)

Digital key and hybrid telephone systems remain one of the best deals in the market for SMB/E today. Why? Two reasons: price and performance. Prices are and have been stable and even lower than what the same systems were five years ago. They cost less and they are reliable. (Smart Buying)

Peer-to-Peer is easy, low cost and provides the basics. Namely **Aastra Telecom's Venture IP** and **Avaya's One-X**. These solutions work very well. (Value Buying)

Open Source be it a gateway, SIP phones and some software with or without a server. There are plenty of do-it-yourself customers with not much tolerance towards any vendor. (Do it ourselves Buying)

Centrex isn't dead; it's very much alive and re-inventing itself. There is a Telco deal that I am privy too that involves a campus like environment between states and all the locations fall within the Telco boundaries. Voice and data will converge for this multi-site deal. (Strategic Buying)

Cheap key/hybrid system sales remain in the SMB/E market in the form of offers from trunk slammers, electricians, alarm companies or anyone having mail order or online access to the gear and want to make a sale. This is an ongoing presence that is included in the gray market. It's a big and profitable one ranging in price, quality, and warranty. The grayer the market- the higher the risk for those buying on ebay or from pawn shops the sweeter the deal. (Savvy Buying)

Custom hybrid solutions can pretty much include TDM, IP, SIP, **Citel** gateway cards, hosted or any mix and match of solutions to meet specific needs of those feeling creative. (Creative Buying)

I mentioned in the **first article** that I wouldn't recommend some customers for either the Hosted VoIP solution or IP-PBX. There are other alternatives and most are listed above and it's important not to get complacent or arrogant in feeling that any one solution will conquer telephony- it simply isn't so. Business customers buy telephony solutions for different reasons in spite of what's arguably good, better or best. That's one natural human behavior you can't ignore if you are going to compete in telephony.

NEXT: Which vendor is willing to make the investment of time?

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