

**COMPARE**  
**SYSTEMS**



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# **1 Abstract**

The objective of this page is to inform people about different PBX providers. The following page has compiled information about some of the top and most popular PBX providers in the industry. This will cover a wide range of topics such as how to choose a provider, the prices of some providers, features that typically come standard with PBX services, and a comparison of multiple providers. Some PBX providers can cater more towards businesses with advanced features such as call recording and click to dial services. Others offer just the standard features like call waiting and voicemail. Learn about the industry and find the right PBX provider for you.

## 2 About PBX Providers

Telephone systems have certainly changed since the old days of the telephone switchboard operator. In the 1960's, switchboard operators manually connected calls by plugging phone cords into different jacks. This was the only way a caller could be connected to a person on the other end of the phone. Later, a system that allowed calls to be made without the use of a receptionist or switchboard operator was developed. This eliminated the need for a manual operator, while also reducing the number of phone lines that were required.

In the 1990s, advancements in telecommunication were made, with things like the auto-attendant and answering machines. Today, calls can be made, transferred, and routed instantly. Even as recently as fifty years ago, no one could have imagined such significant strides in telecommunication technology. Advancements such as text messaging and three-way calls were not available even twenty years ago. These telecommunication achievements have created entirely new careers such as answering services and telephone operators.

From these new careers and the need for instant communication, virtual PBX was born. PBX stands for public branch exchange and is basically a service that can offer many personal or business phone features. Some of the features that are useful for personal and home use are the voicemail feature, the call-waiting feature, and even the three-way calling feature.

For business use, features like click to dial and call recording are important. Click to dial allows the caller to make a call by typing in the last name of the desired recipient. The call-recording feature records the calls. This is useful for training purposes when teaching new employees how to handle calls or review old phone conversations. There are other features ideal for businesses such as hold music, conference calling (or three-way calling), call routing, and voicemail to text services.

The advancements in telecommunications and telephony have progressed through the years and now these advanced telephone features are made available to the masses. Whatever your needs, there is a PBX provider out there that will fit your budget and meet all your requirements. Some offer free trials so you can test the service before committing, some offer a cloud based interface, and some offer very inexpensive basic packages.

### **3 How to Choose a PBX Provider**

Keep these things in mind when choosing the right PBX provider for you:

- How much am I willing to pay for the service?
- Do I need 24/7 customer support?
- Do I want the option of using these services on the cloud?
- What features am I looking for?
- Do I need to try the service before signing on?
- Do I need advanced business features?

When choosing a PBX provider for either your business or your personal life, there are important things to keep in mind. There are many different PBX providers out there, so keep an eye out for the differences when it comes to the features and services they offer. Depending on your needs, you may look for a provider who can offer advanced business features such as conference calling, call recording, the option to have hold music, or dial by name features. If you are looking for a provider for a small business or home use, you may be more interested in a cheap provider that offers standard PBX features such as voicemail and call waiting. Whatever your needs may be, there is a PBX provider out there that is perfect for you.

#### **3.1 Standard Features of PBX Providers**

- Call Waiting
- Call Forwarding
- U.S Based Customer Support
- Caller ID
- Hold Options
- Call Screening
- Voicemail

#### **3.2 Definitions**

PBX – Stands for private branch exchange. This is a type of phone system that allows the business or private owner to have advanced phone features such as call waiting, call routing, and the ability to put the line on hold.

Voicemail to Text – This is a feature offered by many PBX providers, which can translate a voicemail into a text document that can be sent in an email or saved in a note.

Conference Call – A feature offered by some PBX providers. This allows the caller to have more than one

other person listening in on the telephone conversation. Also referred to as: three-way calling.

Hosted Service Provider – A company or business that offers IT and telecommunication services over the internet.

PSTN – Stands for public switched telephone network. Because of this network, people can communicate by cell phone all over the world.

VoIP – Stands for voice over internet protocol. This protocol controls telephone communication that is achieved through the internet.

Auto-Attendant – Callers will reach an auto-attendant commonly when a live representative cannot reach the phone. Through the prompts issued by the auto-attendant, the caller can leave voicemails, be transferred to another number, and more.

Message Alerts – A feature offered by many PBX providers. It allows the customer to receive instant alerts about missed calls or messages through email, text message, or fax.

“On the Cloud” – Commonly refers to the process of controlling something through the internet. Some PBX providers offer services on the cloud, which means that the customer can check their messages, make calls, send a fax and more all online.

Dial by Name – Also referred to as “click to dial,” a feature that allows you to dial numbers by typing in the name of the recipient on the keypad of your phone. The caller is prompted to type in the last name of the person they are trying to reach. The system will then give the called options, IE: press 1 for Dave Smith, press 2 for Kelly Smith.

Call Waiting – A feature that is offered by many PBX providers. It comes into play when someone is on the line and another caller calls in. The person on the line will hear a series of beeps to indicate that they have another call coming in and the option of answering that call while putting the current call on hold.

Conference Call – Also called a “three-way call.” The ability to have more than one person involved in the same telephone call.

Call Blocking – The ability to prevent a specific number from reaching your phone line.

Call Routing – Sending calls to different lines or extensions.

Hold Music – The music that is heard by the person calling in when they are put on hold by the operators or receptionist. In the US it is illegal to have unlicensed songs from the radio or personal mp3s used as hold music. Because of this, most PBX providers offer a set variety of music to choose from.

Virtual Number – A number that is assigned that does not necessarily have a specific phone line attached to it. Clients can choose their virtual numbers area code and its purpose is to give your business a local presence. Many PBX providers offer virtual numbers to their clients.

## **3.3 PBX Service Providers**

### **3.3.1 ITP**

#### *Pros*

ITP is only \$8.32 per month and currently offers two months free through a special promotion.

#### *Cons*

It is not contract free and does not offer twenty-four hour customer support.

#### *Conclusion*

ITP, or Internet Telephone Provider, is a cheap solution for your PBX needs. All of their contracted plans start at \$8.32 per month. Unfortunately, they do require customers to sign a contract and the advertised \$8.32 per month does not include taxes and fees. Some features come standard with the plans and do not cost any extra money per month. The included features are call waiting, voice mail, three way calling, caller ID and call forwarding.

ITP's website is cluttered with promotions and "deals." It is unclear how much your bill will actually be, so I would suggest inquiring for a quote and asking specific questions about the features you need before you decided on ITP for your provider.

### **3.3.2 Vocalocity**

#### *Pros*

Does not require a contract.

#### *Cons*

Does not offer call blocking options or cloud services.

#### *Conclusion*

Vocalocity seems to be a very user-friendly PBX provider that anybody can set up and use. On the website, Vocalocity promises that you can be up and running in fifteen minutes because of the quick set-up time and easy to use interface. Another benefit of this provider is the option to be contract free.

If you do run into any trouble using Vocalocity, don't worry because they offers 24/7 customer support, that is all based in the United States. They also offer a voicemail to text feature, which is important to some businesses. The downside of Vocalocity is the price. Although you can start out with a plan that is as low as twenty-five dollars a month, additional features may quickly jack up your bill.

### **3.3.3 Nextiva**

#### *Pros*

Offers 24-hour support for customers and a money back guarantee.

#### *Cons*

Does not offer call-recording services.

#### *Conclusion*

Nextiva offers 24-hour customer support that is all based in the United States. It also offers features like call waiting, the option to have hold music, option to screen and block calls and call forwarding. They promise a quick and easy set-up, stating that anyone can use Nextiva.

Customers are not required to sign a contract, they offer a pay as you go options with monthly bills instead. It does not offer some of the more advanced PBX features such as voicemail to text, touch dialing, or call recording.

Nextiva does make a promise of being committed to amazing service and states that their platform was developed by over 1,500 top engineers and supports eighteen of the leading global telecommunications providers.

### **3.3.4 Jive Communications**

#### *Pros*

Offers free US long distance calling.

#### *Cons*

Does not offer business features such as: call recording, voicemail to text services or hold music.

#### *Conclusion*

Jive Communications does not require customers to sign a contract and offers many features. They offer call transfers, an auto-attendant, low international rates, customer support, online fax options, and never ring busy. They do not offer some features that are important to businesses. They do not offer hold music, call recording, or voicemail to text services.

These features are vital for some businesses, call recording can be a way to keep information, train employees, or check up on employees' work ethic. Voicemail to text services are a way for staff members to get their messages in an organized and timely manner. Hold music may seem like a small feature, but many businesses use it as a tool to keep customers on the line when they are put on hold.

The features that Jive does offer, however, are standard and therefore do not cost extra. This is a good way to ensure that the price you think you are paying is the actual price on your bill – no hidden fees. So if you can do without some of the more advanced business features. Jive could be a solid option for you or your business.

### **3.3.5 RingCentral**

#### *Pros*

Does not require a contract and offers 24-hour support.

#### *Cons*

One of the more expensive services at \$21.99 per month.

#### *Conclusion*

RingCentral is cloud based, which makes it easy and convenient to control. You can control your phone system from your computer, tablet device, or smartphone. In addition, RingCentral is cloud based, so the setup is easy, and is all done on the internet.

It offers features such as conference calling and business SMS. Business SMS is useful because customers do not need to use their personal numbers to send business related text messages. Through the RingCentral app on your smartphone, they can send business related text messages to employees. RingCentral offers unlimited business SMSing. It also offers standard features like voicemail and call waiting.

RingCentral is contract free with 24-hour customer support. The cloud-based software may take time to get used to, especially if you are not already fairly internet friendly, but for those trying to integrate new technology into their business, RingCentral could be perfect.

### **3.3.6 VoIP.com**

#### *Pros*

Offers services on the clouds

#### *Cons*

Requires a contract. Free set up and support is only available in Los Angeles, California.

#### *Conclusion*

Voip.com is another cloud based PBX provider. A cloud based PBX provider is a good way to make sure your office is never out of reach. It can also help keep you organized and make everyday tasks, like sending faxes, easier. The issue with these types of providers is the time it takes to get used to a new way of doing things.

Voip.com may be good for you if you are looking to switch providers and have already worked with a cloud based PBX provider. This will eliminate the headache of learning a new system entirely. Voip.com does offer free support and free set up; unfortunately, these services are only available in Los Angeles.

They offer features like call blocking, call waiting, and conference calling. They have a thirty-day money back guarantee advertised on their website, although the restrictions and requirements of that guarantee

are unclear.

### **3.3.7 Improcom VoIP**

#### *Pros*

Offers cheap international calling rates.

#### *Cons*

Does not have call recording options or twenty-four hour support.

#### *Conclusion*

Improcom Global Telecom is a PBX provider that offers different plans to fit any budget, the lowest being around \$10, and the most expensive being about \$50. The plans differ in the features and customer support they offer. The most basic plan offers voicemail, caller ID, call waiting, call forwarding and three-way or conference calling. The most expensive package offers multiple lines as well as all the standard features.

The low international rates are advertised at a 40% lower price than other PBX providers. The rates vary by which country you are calling; the most expensive being about 45 cents per minute to Tokelau and the cheapest is a fraction of a cent to Ireland.

They have two main services, on-site PBX and hosted IP-PBX. The on-site is more expensive but offers more features such as intercom and paging. The hosted IP-PBX offers important features as well such as click-to-dial, call screening, and call jump.

It is obvious that Improcom can offer just about any feature you may want, but watch out for extra fees. The website markets themselves as an inexpensive solution to your PBX needs, but your bill can quickly jump up in price with every added feature.

### **3.3.8 VoIPdito**

#### *Pros*

Call recording feature is free.

#### *Cons*

Requires a contact.

#### *Conclusion*

Voipdito.com offers many features for business phone systems. Among these are free internet calls, which mean staff members can communicate with each other for free all around the world. They can offer you a virtual DID numbers, click to call and call recording. They also offer all of the standard features like

voicemail, three-way calling, and call waiting.

Customers do need to sign a contract but the website advertises a starting price of \$4.99 per month with features included. They also offer an unlimited domestic plan for \$19.99 per month as well as an unlimited international plan for \$39.99 per month. All of these plans offer 24-hour customer support services and free set up.

Another good thing about this provider is that they offer a free thirty-day trial of their services so you can try them out before you sign the contract. The trial allows full access to all of the features, and it ends automatically without sneaking any charges to your account. The fact that you could be roped into a contract is off putting, but the option to try to service first is a safe way to see if VoIPdito is right for you.

## 4 PBX Matrix

	ITP	Vocalocity	Nextiva	Jive Communications	Ring Central	VoIP.com	Improcom VoIP	VoIPdito
<b>Music on Hold</b>	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
<b>Voicemail-to-email services</b>	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes
<b>24/7 support</b>	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	no
<b>Contract Free</b>	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no
<b>Cloud Services</b>	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
<b>Multiple Lines</b>	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
<b>Option of Block Numbers</b>	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
<b>Call Recording</b>	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
<b>Advanced Call Forwarding</b>	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<b>Call Waiting</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<b>Price</b>	8.32/month	24.99/month	19.95/month	19.95/month	21.99/month	17.95/month	19.95/month	19.99/month