The Big Switch Off

In 2015 BT announced their intention to turn off the PSTN and ISDN networks by 2025. It was suggested that all customers would need to be migrated to a single IP core network that ultimately will replace all legacy networks.

What are PSTN & ISDN Networks?

PSTN - Public Switched Telephone Network. In simple terms, this is the original copper, analogue network. Data & voice travels over circuit-switched phones lines (copper lines/wires). Currently these are primarily used to deploy analogue voice services and broadband services.

ISDN - Integrated Services Digital Network. This is the network which was developed to carry digital Data & Voice traffic. Being digital this meant data could be transferred and quicker enabling things like video conferencing. With the way broadband services have evolved over the last decade they are predominantly now used to carry digital voice traffic in to business customers who require multiple lines or channels and to have Direct Dial numbers (DDI's). This enables the users to have individual numbers and to make a number of calls concurrently.

What will replace the old PSTN & ISDN Networks?

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) – In a nutshell, VoIP is the technology which allows voice calls to be made over an internet connection. Most small to medium size organisations require a telephone system. When you look at what is required to do this using legacy PSTN or ISDN lines it can be quite expensive.

Now that robust broadband connections are widely available in the UK, it is now becoming the best choice for most organisations. By switching to a VoIP based system it is normally far more cost effective and flexible. This is the main reason use of the old ISDN and PSTN networks is on the decline and the use of the IP networks are now becoming the best solution and more popular.

Business customers, will all eventually be forced to explore new VoIP based telephony systems solutions in the coming years, so if you are in the UK and your organisation relies on ISDN channels, what should you do know to ready yourself for the 'Big' switch off?

VoIP based systems come in two main flavours:

On-premises VoIP system which still involves hardware being installed at site; these are connected by SIP trunks (VoIP lines/channels)

Hosted VoIP System which is a fully cloud based system and normally includes desk phones which simply connect to your LAN (Local Area Network). Each extension comes with a licence, line and often bundles of features and calls.

What to do now...?

If your legacy ISDN phone contract is coming to an end in the next few months or you are looking to replace your telephone system, now is the time to start looking at the options and start exploring the huge benefits of VoIP. **View our NFON hosted solution.**

These are:

- Cost savings – far cheaper rentals, cheaper or even free calls including International calls, and free calls between different sites or offices.
- Functionality – As well as being able to make normal voice calls VoIP can come with a wealth of features and functionality such as Video calling, Instant messaging and Presence.
- Mobile working – Your VoIP system is not tied to your office, as it is normally a cloud based platform users can connect to your organisations phone system on a mobile, tablet of soft phone client (on a laptop) and make and receive calls just like they were sat in the office on their desk phones.
- Integration with your systems – because VoIP technology works over the web you are able to integrate your telephony solution with your desktop or browser and other systems such as email software like outlook or other systems like CRM or accountancy software.
- Flexible & Scalable – New telephone lines or extension can be added or simply reallocated or removed completely depending on what you require. Its fast and flexible and normally won't even incur installation costs.

VoIP is reliant however on having a substantial internet connection. 99% of issues with VoIP come down to insufficient connectivity. If your connection is good and is configured correctly you should have a great experience. Always check that for every concurrent call you wish to make that you have at least 100kb upstream available. So, for example 14 phones in an office would require a minimum of 1400kb or 1.37MB of upstream.

When should you change to VoIP?

We advise businesses we speak to that it is wise to change now rather than waiting until they are forced to.

ISDN and ISDN based telephone systems are now looked at by the networks as legacy solutions which are to be made redundant imminently. As the network invests more in the new VoIP network,

it is more than likely that investment will decline to the old network. The standard of the existing network and support infrastructure may suffer. This could effectively retire the ISDN network well before 2025.

Important Dates regarding the switch off

2020: Hardware sale cut off - Five years before the ISDN & PSTN networks will be turned off; Organisations will not be able to buy a Telephone System that use ISDN or PSTN phone lines. Although 2025 may seem a long way off, 2020 is only 3 years from now so if you plan to change your telephony systems within your organisation in the next few years, you should be looking at a and defiantly not a system which uses PSTN or ISDN.

2025: The legacy network cut off - BT plan to have transferred all existing ISDN customers to their IP network. By looking at moving away from ISDN earlier, it is a great way for organisations to find an alternative and competitive provider themselves and gives companies time to explore VoIP before the 2025 switch off deadline.

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