

# **Telecommunications solution for SMEs**

**- Hosted PBX -**

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## ABSTRACT

Hosted PBX services (such as internal numbers, IVR system, Call forward, Call Center to be rent out for a small monthly fee, without the need to invest in the necessary technical infrastructure) have been continuously gaining in popularity. This is due to the enormous opportunities they create for companies in the sector of small and medium enterprises. This is a new, better way to professional customer service and the increase of productivity among employees, reducing costs at the same time - these benefits cannot be ignored.

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An own VoIP – ICT infrastructure allows creating an integrated communications system within the company, but it also requires considerable financial input associated with its installation and implementation. Unfortunately, usually such expenditures can only be affordable by large enterprises, whereas companies in the SME sector try to improve their communication's system using traditional PBX switchboards or home VoIP solutions. Hosted PBX services create the opportunity to change the fate of SMEs giving them rapidly growing and less expensive alternative.

In this paper we will present to you the most important benefits arising from the implementation of hosted PBX system. You will also learn about the basic differences between traditional and VoIP-based telephony. The reason for this is for you to reasonably decide, whether a hosted PBX by FreecoNet is a good solution for your business.



## **PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SYSTEM AS AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Did you know that the telephone infrastructure that you have in the company, may provide an additional advantage over the competition? However, if it does not work properly, you can easily undermine the efforts that your employees put in the customer service. As the proverb says 'fine feathers make fine birds'. In this context, either you gain the trust of your customers thanks to good and effective communications system, or you give them confidence in your competition.

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For this reason, companies often invest in the implementation of their own PBX switchboards (Private Branch Exchange). This allows you to create a telephone network within the company serving both incoming and outgoing calls of your employees. Application of the Private Branch Exchange can significantly reduce the cost of telephone calls, but before that happens, you still have to invest in its purchase and implementation. In case of hosted PBX service, the situation is different since it does not require investments in the physical infrastructure.

The selection of the proper communications system should not be based on the criterion related to the costs only. It is understandable that (especially for representatives of the SME sector) costs are very important selection criterion and it is proven that hosted PBX services allow for significant cost savings. However, before we bring up this issue, we would like to present you some other advantages associated with the use of such services.

VoIP telephony is nothing more than voice communication that uses Internet connection to work. Nowadays, it is increasingly being used in business, because it gives much more possibilities than traditional telephony. Wide range of services offered by VoIP improves employees' productivity and increases customers' satisfaction while reducing the cost of calls at the same time. When we examine SME sector from the perspective of constant development all of the value added services offered by the Internet telephony make it an extremely attractive alternative to traditional telephone services.

## WHAT DETERMINES THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF VOIP FOR THE SME SECTOR?

The possibility of using modern and reliable telephone network is not reserved only for large companies with significant money to invest. When you decide to use the hosted PBX - the necessary equipment, technology and software is offered to you by the provider of such system. Thanks to this your company will not have to bear any significant costs, which are indispensable in case of purchase, installation and implementation of the traditional telephone network. Your only costs are related to:

- lease of the system (monthly fee),
- the purchase of VoIP gateways (to which you can connect your regular phone), or IP phones,
- investment in a better Internet connection (if necessary).



PBX that is offered as a hosted model is based on VoIP, a technology to transfer audio through broadband lines or dedicated networks using IP protocol (commonly referred to as Internet telephony). In order to execute connections PBX uses VoIP which guarantees low rates for outgoing calls and greater functionality for incoming calls.

Hosted PBX provides a unique combination of features, among which the most important are: low-cost calls and lease, scalability, and numerous additional services. These capabilities allow each company not only to streamline, but also to reduce costs of communication - both within the organization and external environment. PBX also helps to improve customer service and to increase employees' productivity. It does not matter whether a company employs 5 or 50 people - in each case hosted PBX provides the same benefits.

## **HIGH PRODUCTIVITY AND IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE THROUGH PBX**

Hosted PBX provides your company range of innovative solutions that will help you to make it more modern and efficiently managed. PBX features allow to forward voice messages to e-mail and automatically generate billing reports of all the phone calls made. There are also many other options – the incoming call can be automatically directed to the appropriate person, without long-lasting waiting for a connection and without the need to select any additional extensions.

### **SCALABILITY**

This feature provides you with the ability to include or reduce the amount of services and positions in relation to those already in use. You can start using the hosted PBX with a small number of features - for example with a simple IVR system (called Interactive Voice Response), which allows the caller to choose an internal number to individual employees (after having listened to the welcome message). As your business grows, scalability will allow you to add more sophisticated features and their further development without any restrictions. For example, the IVR system can expand in such a way that the attendance of all repeated requests becomes automated and forwarded to customer service. You can also run other additional services such as Virtual Fax – allows you to send and receive faxes over the Internet without requiring physical possession of a fax machine. It takes only few minutes and it is also very simple in use. Thanks to hosted PBX the management of telecommunications system in your company can be really easy. In particular, if we compare it to managing the infrastructure installed within the company.

### **LOW-COST LEASE**

The lease of PBX is much cheaper than installing your own telecommunications infrastructure. For a company with 15 employees, expenses on hosted PBX - compared to traditional PBX - are almost a one-third lower. In addition, hosted PBX has many advantages that cannot be measured by means of financial indicators i.e. ease of expansion and reconfiguration, ease of use in case of geographically distributed structure, the ability to integrate with mobile phone, total independence from changes within the company - both infrastructural and organizational. Therefore, developing company does not have to bear any considerable costs of implementation and the financial resources saved in this manner can be used for investments.

## **VIRTUAL COMPANY AND ITS SPATIAL FREEDOM**

Extremely useful features of PBX, to which you gain access thanks to FreecoNet, will also reduce the costs associated with the expansion of your head office as well as its infrastructure. In a situation where one of the employees may not be present at his desk, a very useful feature called "Call forward" comes in handy. It allows you to easily transfer incoming calls to an alternative location and completion of an important call. As an extension of this feature we have another call forwarding service called "Find me" – allows for an indication not just one, but many places where you can stay and which in turn should be switched in order to complete an incoming call. Therefore, employees can perform their duties from anywhere in the world as if they were in the room next door.

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## **THE COST OF MODERNIZING THE SYSTEM – 0 PLN ANNUALLY!**

Implementation of hosted PBX services does not require any costs associated with the purchase of software, because all the modernization and software updates are the responsibility of supplier. The supplier must also ensure the functioning of technical assistance in case of any problems.

## FOR WHICH COMPANIES HOSTED PBX SERVICES ARE THE BEST SOLUTION?

The decision to change the existing telephone system should be well considered. There are cases in which a hosted PBX system will not be the best solution. This applies especially to large corporations, for which it seems better to own VoIP infrastructure instead. The following table illustrates a situation where hosted PBX services are the most effective.

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<b>Hosted PBX</b>	<b>Own PBX infrastructure</b>
<b>Small and medium enterprises</b>	<b>Corporations that use economies of scale and have their own IT infrastructure</b>
Dispersed offices, workers living in different places	Workers located in one place
Virtual office	Virtual office not required
Developing company	Size of the company and number of employees is constant
Changing customer requirements	Mature and well-ordered market
Strong need to reinforce the system of customer service	The existing system of customer service
Telephone system as a competitive advantage	Professional telephone system as a standard feature of the business

## SERVICES OFFERED BY FREECONET'S HOSTED PBX

### LOW-COST CALLS

All registered users of the platform talk for free - anytime, regardless of the place they are in. Connections outside the network are offered at low-cost rates thanks to the TelArena service.

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### TELARENA

FreecoNet's module that allows carrying out calls to numbers not registered in FreecoNet at the lowest possible rates. Calls are carried out by major and independent operators, who have joined TelArena (currently these are: Crowley, Deutsche Telekom, EXATEL, GTS Energis and Netia). The process of selecting and calling is fully automated and does not require from the user to change the existing way of making calls.



Calls are offered at very attractive prices:

<b>Exemplary price offers (as at 22 October 2009) for:</b>		
	<b>landline</b>	<b>Mobile</b>
<b>FreecoNet</b>	<b>0 PLN</b>	
<b>Poland</b>	<b>od 0,05 PLN</b>	<b>od 0,31 PLN</b>
<b>Australia</b>	od 0,06 PLN	od 0,19 PLN
<b>Belgium</b>	od 0,09 PLN	od 0,69 PLN
<b>China</b>	Od 0,06 PLN	od 0,06 PLN
<b>Czech Republic</b>	od 0,09 PLN	od 0,72 PLN
<b>Denmark</b>	od 0,07 PLN	od 0,63 PLN
<b>France</b>	od 0,08 PLN	od 0,40 PLN
<b>Spain</b>	od 0,07 PLN	od 0,61 PLN
<b>Netherlands</b>	od 0,09 PLN	od 0,60 PLN
<b>Ireland</b>	od 0,05 PLN	od 0,91 PLN
<b>Canada</b>	od 0,03 PLN	---
<b>Norway</b>	od 0,09 PLN	od 0,55 PLN
<b>Germany</b>	od 0,07 PLN	od 0,54 PLN
<b>Russia</b>	od 0,06 PLN	od 0,21 PLN
<b>Sweden</b>	od 0,06 PLN	od 0,09 PLN
<b>UK</b>	od 0,04 PLN	od 0,21 PLN
<b>Italy</b>	od 0,08 PLN	od 0,61 PLN
<b>USA</b>	od 0,03 PLN	od 0,09 PLN

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The above rates are presented in **gross prices**.

**During the first month of using FreecoNet - including additional services - no license fee is being charged. After this period, the monthly fee for user's account and phone number (the equivalent of one position) is only 1,95 PLN gross.**

## **VIRTUAL SWITCHBOARD, WHICH USES IVR SYSTEM (INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE)**

Multi-element and full service that provides a professional functioning of the voice greeting system and call forwarding using speech synthesis technology and WAV files. The service is available as a hosted. Strona 11

FreecoNet moved here a step ahead of competition, basing its services on an innovative system of speech synthesis (TTS - text to speech). This solution allows you to create any voice announcements directly by typing them on the computer's keyboard. You write a message that you want your customers to hear and the system converts it into a professional audio recording. It is possible thanks to the use of IVONA TTS polish speech synthesizer made by IVO Software, which is considered to be the best in the world (according to the opinion of experts in international Blizzard Challenge). Thus your problems with unprofessional recordings played to your customers are over.

Of course, if you want - you can record your own voice message or use a previously prepared audio file in .mp3 or .wav format

### **Elements of IVR**

- 1. Menu** – provides a list of options to the caller. Once a pre-recorded message has been heard, the caller may select a desired option from the phone keypad.

An exemplary recording, pre-defined in the Freeconet panel, might sound like the following: “for secretary’s office press 1, for fax’s signal press 2, for support press 3”.

- 2. Internal number** – enables the caller to connect with the chosen extension number. Once a pre-recorded message has been heard, the caller may select a desired option from the phone keypad. If the number is not chosen, the connection may be transferred to random account or service. An exemplary recording, pre-defined in the Freeconet panel, might sound like the following: „Welcome in our company! Choose a desired extension number or wait for the operator’s response... for secretary’s office press 10, for fax’s signal press 30”.

**3. Condition** - enables an incoming call to be forwarded to different places of IVR system, or to various users, depending on the criteria set (conditions). Single "Condition" may be based on several criteria built on the basis of:

- time and day of the incoming call,
- number/ numbers, from which calls are being made.

Condition service enables international callers to be forwarded to an English speaking worker, and others to those communicating in Polish. It may be also used to inform about company's opening hours, when it is closed, by playing the following announcement: "The company is currently closed. Please contact us from Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 16:00 p.m., and from 9:00 a.m. to 14:00 p.m. on Saturdays". At any other time the connection will be forwarded to the secretary's office.

**4. Play message** – allows the caller to listen to previously created voice announcement or to record one by himself. After that, the connection is forwarded (to the user or other service). An example recording, pre-defined in the FreecoNet panel, might sound like the following: "Hello, this is John Smith. I am on holiday at the moment; your call will be transferred to the Marketing Department" or "Welcome to our company. In a moment you will be connected with one of our consultants"

**5. Find me** – attempts to connect the FreecoNet accounts or services, according to an order (list) defined by the user. It is an extension of "Call forward" service and allows indicating not only one, but many places we may be in and to which the calls may be forwarded. The service stops working when the call is finally completed.

**6. Call forward** – makes it possible to forward incoming calls to any number. The call is directed through one of the accounts registered through the FreecoNet panel. After the call has ended, the caller might be forwarded to another service.

**7. Record message** – works on the basis of voicemail and enables the caller to leave any voice message, which is later sent to a pre-defined email account as .mp3 file.

## CALL CENTER

Hosted service that enables to create a professional system of customer service, operated by a group of consultants. People calling the company (in case when all lines are busy) do not get a busy line signal, but a message reply that informs about the position in the queue. Shall the call be ended the consultant will automatically receive a next call from the person that is first in the waiting queue. Others move up in the queue and a proper message is replayed to them.

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## VIRTUAL FAX

The service enables to employ the full fax functionality, without the need of actually possessing physical device. It is an easy and quick way of both sending and receiving faxes while saving money on the purchase and exploitation of traditional equipment.

Virtual Fax is a combination of three innovative FreecoNet's functionalities (fax2mail, mail2fax, web2fax). Despite of their latest technological advancement they are extremely easy to use.

It is a very useful tool in the company. Not only because of the considerable savings, but mainly for its convenience and the possibility of continuous monitoring of business correspondence.

## CALL RECORDING

Call Recording service allows to record and store calls. Its advanced configuration options and simple operation make it a very useful solution for company's customer service departments, remote workers or multi-branch companies.

Thanks to "Call Recording" it is possible to record both incoming and outgoing calls as well as those conducted by the "Call Center" service. You decide where and how long the recording files should be stored. FreecoNet allows you to save files on its servers by up to 1, 3 or 6 months and also transferring them to an external FTP server.

## DIAL-IN

Dial-in is a name of a functionality that enables to call the FreecoNet system from any phone and any Telco, and then call a desired number both within FreecoNet network and outside due to TelArena service. This way, in case of no internet connection, by dialing-in onto your own FreecoNet number you are able to establish local, long-distance or international phone call with TelArena rates, so several times cheaper than with traditional Telco.

## AUTHORIZATION WITH CALLBACK OPTION

Authorization service with a Callback option enabled causes that after making a call and a successful authorization, the service disconnects the call and a moment later the system automatically calls back the caller. This service allows you to establish low-cost calls regardless of the place and access to the telecommunications network.

## INTEGRATION WITH WEBSITE

FreecoNet offers range of applications and services designed for integration with external systems. These are both simple applications to make calls through the website and innovative services to external systems.

- 1. Compile connection** - Extremely innovative functionality that initiates the connection between two numbers via website. It has multiple applications. As an example it may be used as an innovative way of contacting with your company's customers. After a proper configuration in FreecoNet's panel there is a possibility to add graphical element with an

empty box for entering a phone number on the website. Later it is enough that a customer will fill in the box with his phone number and click "Call" for the service to immediately call a given number and then compile the connection with the company (e.g. reception, sales department or Call Center). The service may also call the company first and after successful connection it may compile the connection with the customer - all depends on the configuration.

- 2. Integrate** - the service repeatedly invokes the website defined during the configuration setup, sending it all the information about the pressed buttons on the phone keypad, and reading the text returned to the caller at the same time.

Single "Integrate" service is able to monitor multiple callers simultaneously. As an example this application may inform the customer about his order status after typing in his order identification number.

- 3. FlashCall** - its functionality enables website visitors to call the page owner for free, by clicking on one simple button. All what you need to do is to generate html code, put it on website and the plug-in will appear as a contact button.

## **ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR BUSINESS ENTITIES**

- 1. DDI (Direct Dial In)** – enables to allocate a desired range of telephone numbers - 10, 50, 100 sequences - depending on the needs of the business. This allows to assign each worker his own city number in order to make calls directly to his desk. In this way, even a few numbers may be supported on a single SIP account.
- 2. 0-80x hotline numbers** - allows the customer to call the company's hotline for free or at least partially free.

## **FRECONET'S PBX – EASY TO IMPLEMENT**

Implementation of hosted PBX services by FreecoNet, in contrast to the traditional PBX, does not require any initial costs. An additional advantage is short implementation time.

## **NECESSARY HARDWARE**

Probably at this moment your company has the most important and necessary equipment to make use of hosted PBX. If you have a high-speed internet connection and a router, the only additional devices required are compatible phones that support SIP standard or VoIP gateways. As an alternative you may set call forwarding to your PSTN numbers from a traditional Telco – this service is not free but still very profitable if there is no proper internet connection or phone devices.

## **INSTALLATION**

If your company already has the necessary equipment, installation of FrecoNet's PBX will take about 15 minutes. No specialized knowledge is required, but in case of any problems you can always count on a free assistance from the supplier.

## **TRANSITION TO ANOTHER SYSTEM**

Implementation of FrecoNet's PBX can be carried out gradually. Start with a few services only and append new ones as the scale of your business grows. FrecoNet's solutions enable also simultaneous collaboration with traditional telephony systems, eliminating the need for immediate and complete transition to the new telephone system.

## **POSSIBILITY OF TRANSFERRING NUMBERS**

You can use the hosted VoIP solutions while maintaining your present phone number – just transfer it to FrecoNet. Note that since July this year it is possible to transfer phone numbers of subscribers of TP SA to FrecoNet from all 49 numbering zones in Poland. In addition, users of operators like: Exatel, GTS Energis, Netia and NASK can also transfer their numbers to FrecoNet

## SUMMARY

We have presented the advantages and opportunities that arise from the implementation of hosted PBX services. After reading this paper you should be able to know how to break free from the inflexible traditional telecommunications systems that do not allow you to make any significant changes. Now it is up to you whether you use this opportunity. Contact our counselor today by calling one of following numbers: 801 009 500 or +48 222 660 660.



## INFORMATION ABOUT FREECONET

FreecoNet was created in September 2006 and is a platform for Internet telephony, which enables free phone calls among all numbers registered within FreecoNet – regardless of Telcos (either VoIP or traditional) and country of origin. It is enough to have Internet access and to be registered at [www.freeconet.pl](http://www.freeconet.pl). Unregistered numbers may be reached with the lowest available rates thanks to TelArena service (which gathers several independent Telcos that compete for outgoing calls hosting). In this way, users of FreecoNet can make considerable savings while staying at their current phone numbers or they may also completely abandon their operator and get the phone number from one of the operators present on TelArena. The technology for FreecoNet is provided by the team of specialist from Datera SA ([www.datera.pl](http://www.datera.pl)). - technology based company which designs and implements modern, technologically advanced telecommunication solutions.

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