



Security First IT

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WHY A FREE PBX SOLUTION IS RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Growing staff? Time to grow your phone system as well.

As a business grows and adds employees, customers, and vendors, one of the first things upgraded is the phone/communication system. As you add staff, usually each one needs a phone at their desk and a way to easily communicate with each other internally.

Many companies end up getting a PBX phone system, which stands for Private Branch Exchange. The easiest way to think of it is a multi-line system that allows inter-office communication by means of extensions. Each of the internal extensions all share a specific number of outgoing phone lines to communicate with customers or others outside your building.

Some of the benefits of a PBX system include (courtesy of Lifewire):

- Ability to use multiple phone lines both internationally and externally
- Internal phone extensions can share the same outgoing line
- Free PBX phone to phone communication within the organization
- Utilize VoIP (Voice over IP), often much cheaper and with more features than landlines
- Helpful add-ons like call recording and voicemail
- Automatic response options where a number is pressed to route to the appropriate department
- Video and audio conferencing capabilities
- Apps that allow phone calls to be transferred or answered on mobile devices

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The great news for smaller and medium-sized businesses that are expanding is that free PBX solutions are out there giving organizations multiple choices for a corporate communication system, without needing to spend thousands of dollars.

What Do You Mean by “Free PBX”? Is It Really Free?

The answer to this is both yes and no. The software itself that can be tailored to run the PBX communication system is offered free as an open-source GUI (graphical user interface) by several providers. However, you do need to have the computer and phone hardware that connect to the system.

You may also want to work with an IT provider that makes it easy for you by offering the pre-programmed modules or customized set up. One example is FreePBX, which offers modules like Call Center Builder and Customer Relationship Management.

This still ends up being a lower-cost option for businesses because you can often choose from lower-priced hardware models and can also use PBX systems that allow connection to smartphones. One of the cheapest phones we saw that was PBX system compatible was a refurbished model for just \$39.99.

The Top Free Open Source PBX Software Providers

There are several different companies that offer free open source PBX solutions for business communication systems. Here is a rundown of the top five.



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- **Asterisk (www.asterisk.org)**

Asterisk is one of the most well known PBX open source platforms. It was developed by Digium in 1999 and has continued to evolve and get better along with phone and computer technology.

- **SIPFoundry (www.sipfoundry.org)**

A PBX solution used by multiple school districts and higher education institutions. The company was founded in 2004 and its software is designed to be very easy to use.

- **FreePBX (www.freepbx.org)**

FreePBX is a web-based open-source platform that manages the Asterisk software. The company is currently owned by Sangoma Technologies Corporation.

- **FreeSWITCH (www.freeswitch.org)**

FreeSWITCH prides itself on being the “world’s first” cross-platform scalable free multi-protocol telephony platform. The software is licensed under Mozilla Public License and was first released in 2008.

- **Kamailio (www.kamailio.org)**

Kamailio, which also came out in 2008, is the result of over a decade of development in several different routers and open-source communication projects.

What’s Involved with Getting Started?

Whichever PBX solution you choose, they’ve all made it fairly easy to get your phone system up and running with minimal equipment needed. The initial things you need are:

- A computer, which acts as the server for the program.
- A LAN, local area network that connects your office computers together.
- The phones, a typical desk phone that is compatible with PBX technology or, in most cases, a smartphone will also work.

You may also want to have professional IT help with the initial set up. Often they not only can get you set up pretty quickly, but they can also help ensure you have all the features you want to be installed and working properly.

Conclusion

One of the biggest benefits of installing a free open source PBX phone system for your business is that it can double as an extra employee when you need it. These systems have been continuously advanced over time for a more personal feel. They can warmly greet customers when they first call up and efficiently route them to the appropriate department.

A PBX system from free open-source software can save businesses quite a bit of money and make their internal and external communications much more efficient. And if you work with the right system, you can easily add modules to allow video conferencing, call recording for customer quality, and many other web-connected goodies.

No more are phones just limited to voice calls on one stationary phone. Staff can easily transfer a call from a desk phone to a mobile, invite other team members to a video conference with a mouse-click, and of course, keep everyone connected to your customers and each other. And all for much less than businesses used to have to pay for an office phone system.

