5 Common Hosted VoIP Myths *Debunked*

Introduction

Organizations are always looking to leverage better technology to reach their goals, and many have latched onto Hosted VoIP as a means to do so. Hosted VoIP offers flexibility and mobility well suited to today's rapidly evolving work environment. However, certain potential pitfalls—like poor quality or security concerns—have prevented some from adopting this growing technology.

Here we discuss five common concerns buyers have when considering the move to a Hosted VoIP solution. We also provide questions that should help you find a provider who can eliminate those concerns.

Hosted VoIP in a Nutshell

Voice over Internet Protocol (or VoIP) transmits calls digitally, usually along Internet connections rather than through the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). Hosted VoIP means that the hardware, servers, and services are hosted and managed at an off-site location (i.e., at the provider). These advantages in infrastructure offer enriched functionality at a substantially lower total cost of ownership than traditional on-premises alternatives.

PREDICTED HOSTED VOIP ADOPTION

Organizations are turning to Hosted VoIP solutions at an incredible rate:

- Mobile VoIP users are expected to reach 1 billion by the year 2017.*
- The number of Hosted VoIP seats in 2012 is set to double by 2016.†
- Combined business and residential VoIP services will be worth around 75 billion by 2015.†
- In the next few years, the IP communication technology industry will go from owning 17 percent of the business voice sector to more than 40 percent ().††

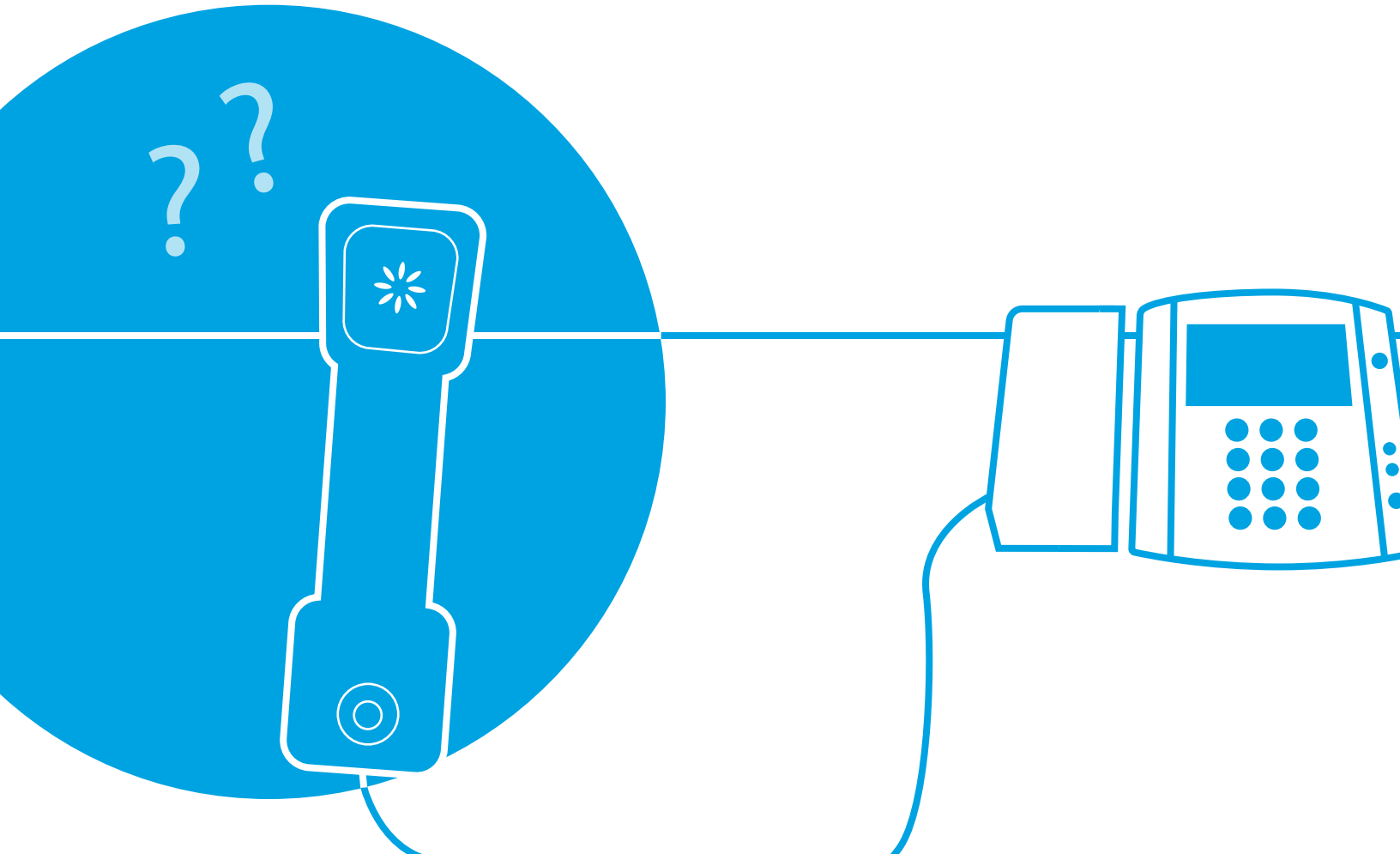
*Juniper Research
†Infonetics Research
††Charlie Reed, Atlantic-ACM

MYTH 1: “I’ll lose my existing number(s).”

Switching phone numbers can leave some of your customers without their lifeline to your company. Customer retention is tricky enough without throwing an unnecessary wrench in the works, which is why most companies prefer to port their existing business numbers when they go with a new service provider.

As you research Hosted VoIP providers, look for those who make number porting a priority and include it as part of their migration process. Many Hosted VoIP providers go so far as to dedicate an entire department to porting existing client telephone numbers to new Hosted VoIP accounts.

To get their numbers ported, clients sign a Letter of Agency (LOA) authorizing their VoIP company to request their number(s) from the existing telecommunications provider. The existing provider is then legally authorized and obliged to port the number(s) to your VoIP provider. This process ensures that the numbers are ported correctly and on schedule during the implementation process.



MYTH 2: “My call quality will suffer.”

Jitter: When an irregularity in the data path scrambles packets so they arrive out of order, this can lead to poor call quality.

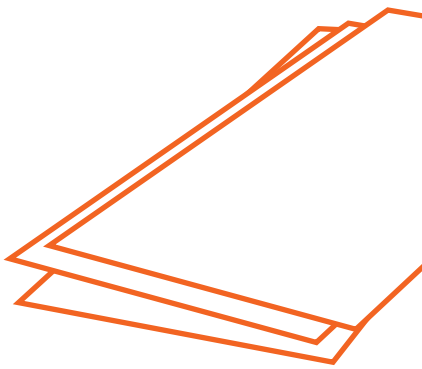
Latency: The time it takes for sound to travel from a speaker’s mouth to a listener’s ear. Faulty latency can cause an echo effect.

Delay: Long intervals in the delivery of data packets that can cause network issues such as queue congestion or device delay.

When VoIP was first starting out, users complained about echoes, background noise, and delays. This was because unlike typical landlines, VoIP technology compressed voice data into “packets” that were then transmitted to their destination, decompressed, and delivered. The technology was so new, and so many factors had to come together to make the solution work, that call quality suffered.

Internet and VoIP technology has come a long way since then. Providers have identified the underlying causes of poor call quality and established strategies for overcoming them. These strategies—usually labeled Quality of Service (QoS) protocols—evaluate disruptive factors like jitter, latency, and delay, and guarantee that certain resource levels are allocated to voice traffic.

To alleviate your quality concerns, ask potential providers about their Quality of Service and how they ensure high call quality.



MYTH 3: “Features come at an additional cost.”

With most phone services, you pay extra for premium features and functionality. This forces organizations to weigh which options they can do without, as well as how paying for must-have features will impact their budgets. Management time can be spent on making sure the correct features and permissions are periodically turned on and off to try and save money as employee and business needs fluctuate. You wind up asking questions like: do I really need all those conference bridges? What about call recording? How many call attendants, voicemail boxes, and custom greetings can I get by on?

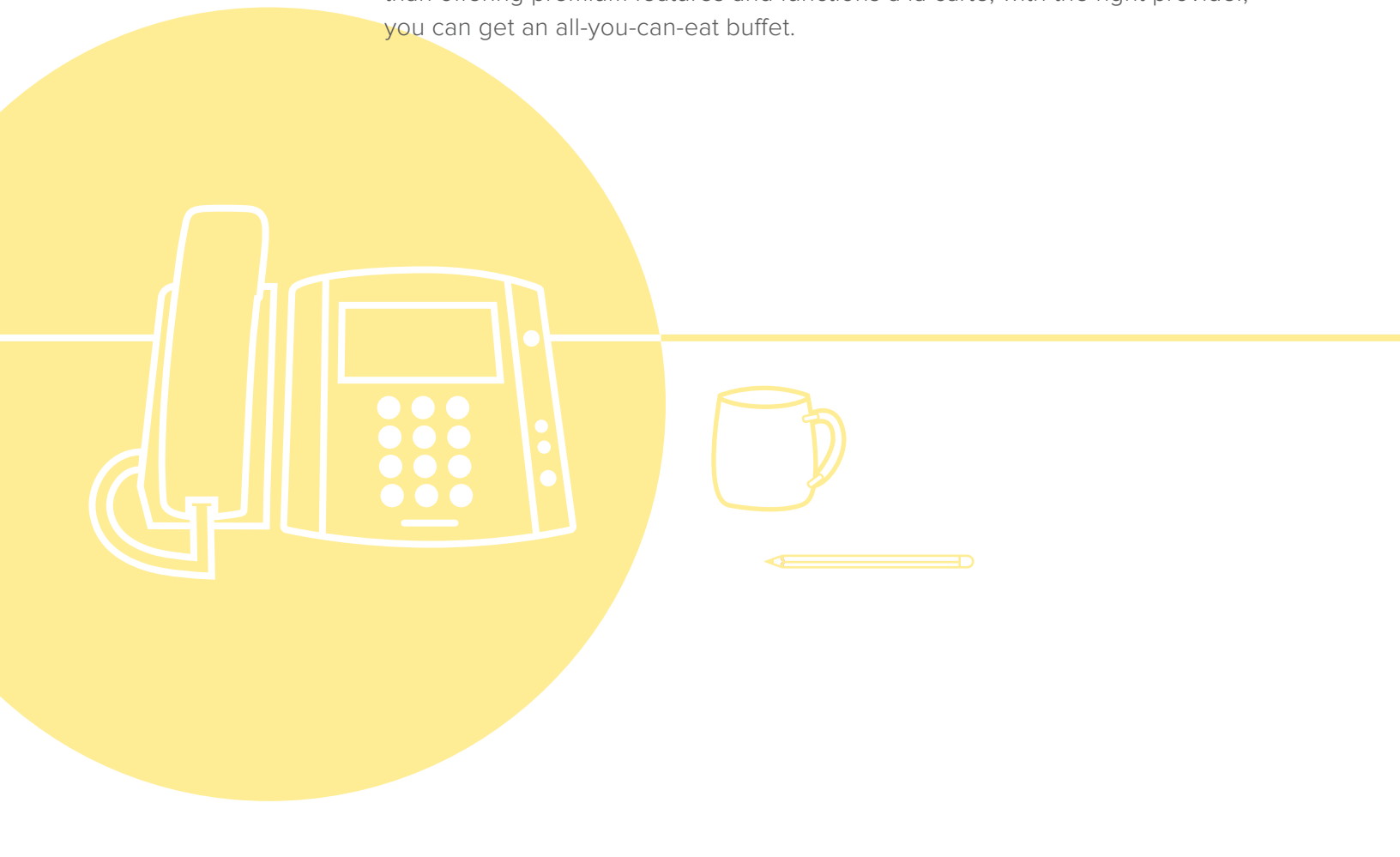
What if you didn’t have to choose?

Because Hosted VoIP is Cloud-based, many of its features are delivered on a virtual basis and have no appreciable limits. Imagine it: unlimited local and long-distance minutes, conference bridges, voicemail boxes, call queues, auto attendants, ring groups, and more, at no additional cost.

But not all Hosted VoIP providers offer their full feature suite in a standard service package, which is why you ought to ask providers about their feature tiers. Rather than offering premium features and functions a la carte, with the right provider, you can get an all-you-can-eat buffet.

AN ADDED NOTE

Have providers explain how they handle updates and implementation of new features. With a true hosted solution, delivery of updates and new features should be seamless and automatic via the Cloud, with zero downtime so your organization can continue rolling along without a hitch.



MYTH 4: “I won’t have mobility options.”

With 34 million Americans working from home, and an expected 63 million by 2016 (Forrester Research’s US Telecommuting Forecast), employers are looking for ways to cater to the remote workforce. The trick is doing so without disclosing personal cell or home numbers while also ensuring that remote workers remain an active part of company operations. Additionally, organizations are seeking options to allow workers who are traveling abroad to still access their work phones through their mobile devices.

When discussing mobility needs with a Hosted VoIP provider, ask if they offer a softphone application. A VoIP softphone can bridge the gap between an office handset and a mobile device. When downloaded, a softphone allows a device—be it a smartphone, tablet, or desktop computer—to mirror the functionality of a desktop handset and operate as an IP phone.

Also, find out what functions employees can access through the softphone app. Ideally, your workers should have access to extension dialing, conference calls, and more, no matter where they are: in the office, overseas, or at home—all without disclosing devices, cell numbers, or other information. As far as any inbound caller knows, they’re reaching a worker sitting at a desk in an office because the Caller ID and number are the same, whether that employee is working from home or telecommuting from an airport.

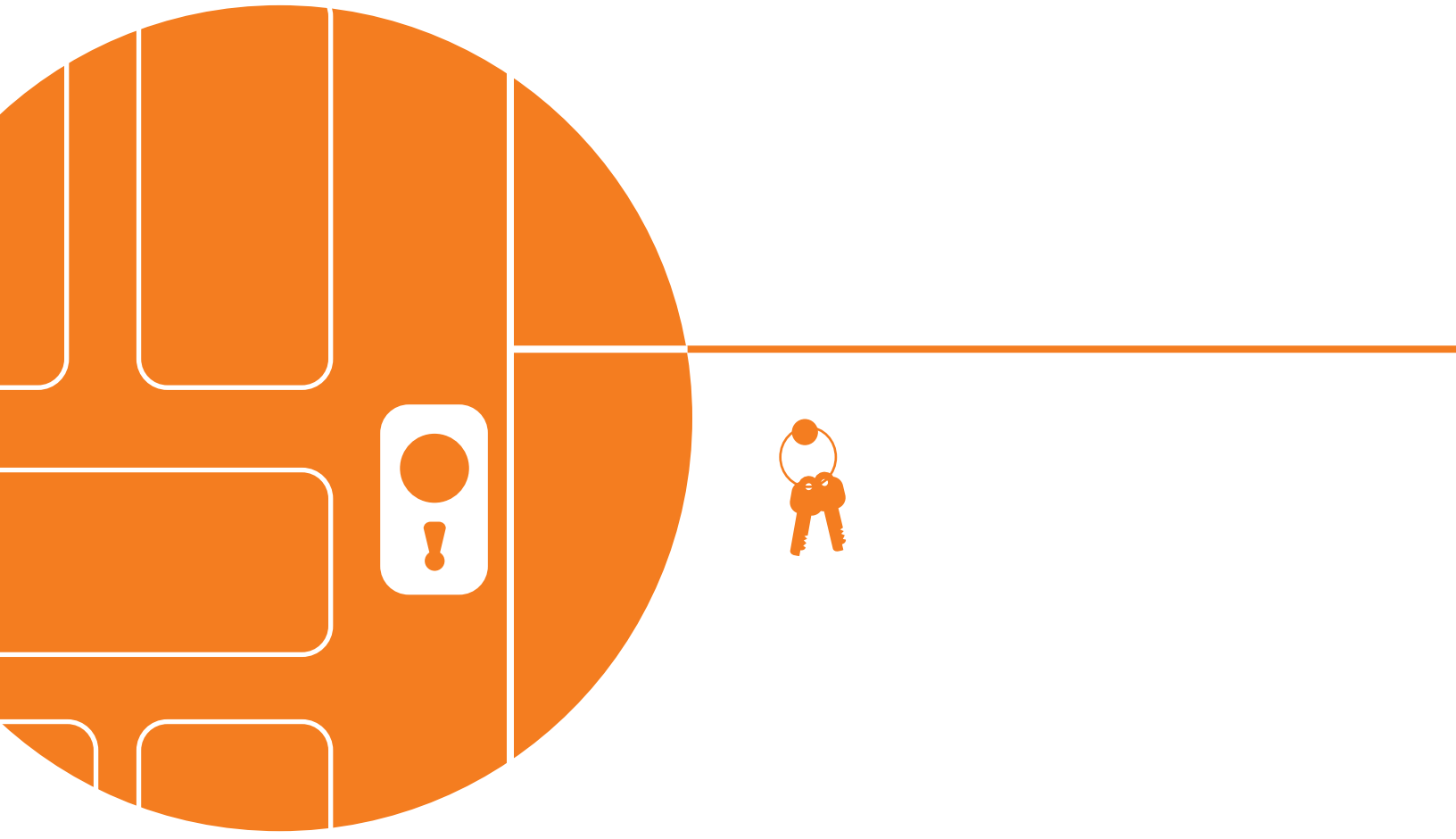
MYTH 5: “Hosted VoIP technology isn’t secure.”

Recent headlines have given us plenty of reasons to worry about online security. With the NSA scandal, the theft and publication of racy celebrity photos, and the hacking of corporate heavy-hitters like Target, Home Depot, and Gmail, Cloud security has become a serious concern for many organizations.

Security worries about Hosted VoIP center around the fact that voice packets pass through various networks—including the Cloud—leaving that data vulnerable to interception, eavesdropping, and service theft. Packets can be mined to find user names, passwords, calling and called numbers, and other information.

There are steps Hosted VoIP vendors can take to bulk up on security, which is why you should ask a few questions.

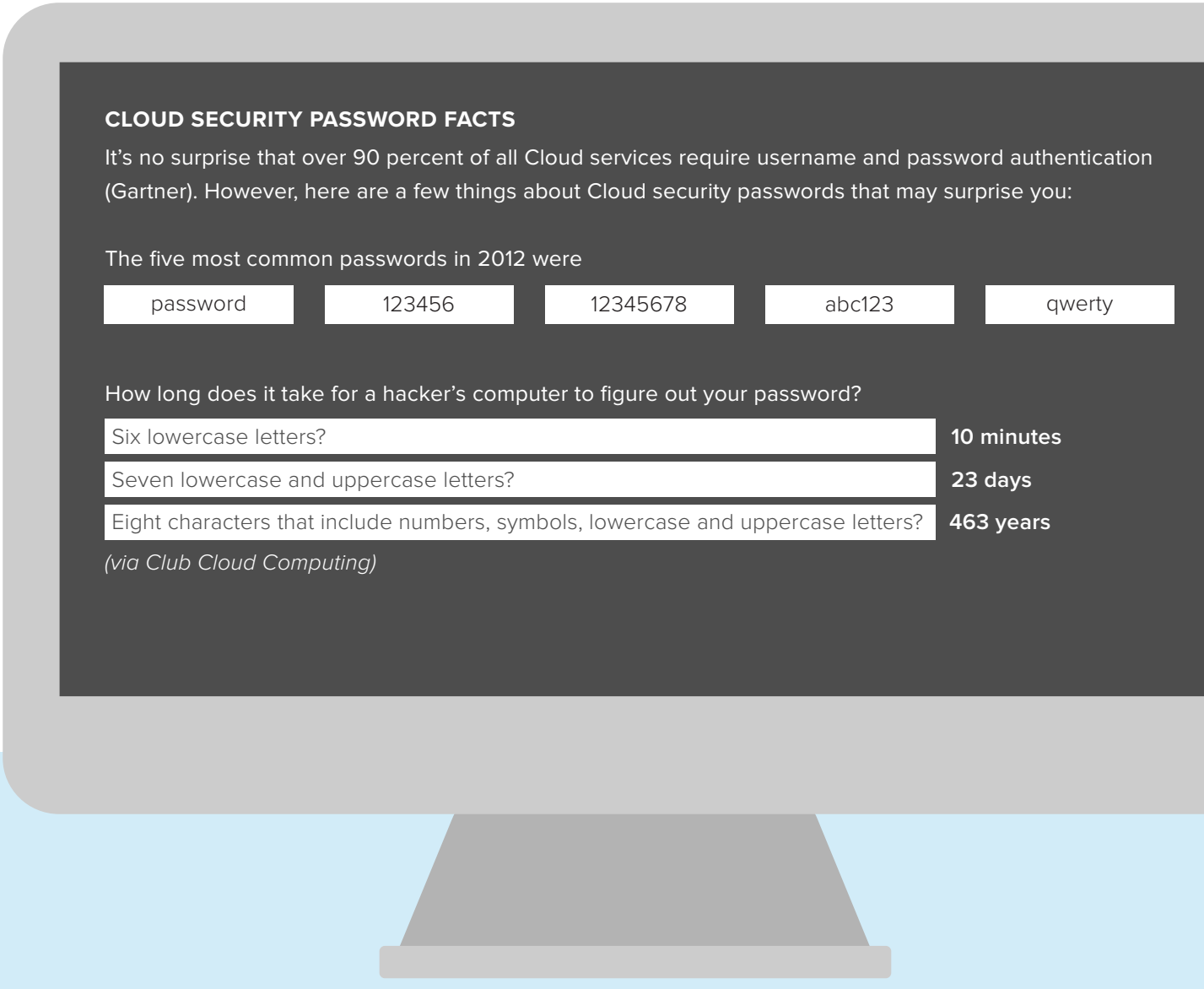
Is their infrastructure actively monitored for issues, faults, and attacks? Secure providers will monitor system performance using several service parameters. If the system fails any of these parameters, you want alarms sounding and lights flashing at your vendor’s place.

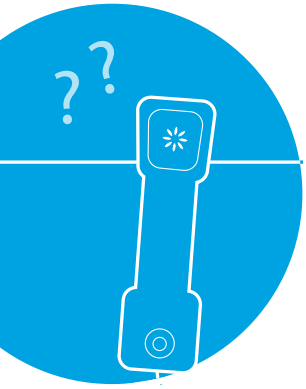


Do they use end-to-end encryption? Encrypting data adds another level of protection. Hosted VoIP providers should employ a variety of encryption mechanisms, like Transport Layer Security (TLS) for signaling between phones and the provider's infrastructure, and Secure RTP (SRTP) for transmitting media.

Do they provide granular controls, granting different levels of access for different users? Providing various levels of access to users can create added layers of security, with a select group of administrators establishing varying group and user permissions. These permissions should include long-distance or international dialing, recording voice prompts, and accessing the system's web management portal.

Is the online web management portal password protected? Sometimes the simplest and most basic security measures can be the best line of defense. Cover all your bases by making sure that an account administrator authenticates each user on the web management portal.





Conclusion

Though Hosted VoIP is swiftly becoming the standard for business communications worldwide, you may still have concerns about adopting it. The best way to allay these concerns is to know what questions to ask, making it easier to connect with a Hosted VoIP provider that meets your organization's communication requirements.

About Jive

Still have questions? Jive representatives are ready to talk about Jive's enterprise-grade Hosted VoIP and Unified Communications solutions. Jive's hosted services run on Jive Cloud, an open-standards, cloud-based platform. The Jive Cloud architecture has been purpose-built to deliver the most reliable, powerful, and economical hosted communication services available to the enterprise market. For more information, or to request a demo, visit jive.com/products.

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