

Virtual PBX - Virtual Hosted Phone System for NA Help Lines

Virtual PBX or virtual phone system is a cost-efficient alternative to traditional PBX phone system. The virtual phone system is a fully automatic call answering and routing communication system that is hosted in a data center. It is provided through advanced Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology and managed by a communication service provider. Virtual PBX phone service is ideal for helping NA fellowships to improve or establish an efficient method of receiving, making, and transferring telephone calls without the necessity of an onsite telephone system.

Feature-rich Virtual PBX System

Virtual PBX system is distinguished by a number of call management features. Some of the common features include: auto attendant, call forwarding, automatic call distribution, voice mail and fax to mail. All call features can be customized as per specific business requirements. The advanced auto attendant feature can efficiently route incoming calls to the proper person or department or informational mailbox. All incoming calls are received with professional business greetings and customized greetings can also be set. The call forwarding feature can forward calls to any phone at any location. It provides the facility for the employees to work from home or even when traveling. Callers are able to navigate the system easily and may have greetings repeated or return to earlier menus.

When voice messages are left the system may be programmed to transmit an e-mail to a designated recipient. The e-mail will show the time of the call, the extension or mailbox in which the message was left, and it will contain a wav. Or Mp3 file. The recipient may then listen to the message without the necessity of calling into the system.

Through the use of find me/follow me technology calls may be routed to a number of live attendants in a programmed sequence. This feature allows the phone system to be supported by multiple users in diverse locations whether fixed or mobile. Some systems allow the call recipient to hear that the system is calling and they have a choice whether or not to accept the call. Should no one be available to answer the call is returned to the host system with the option of leaving a message in the appropriate mailbox.

The unique combination of phone and computer provides many advanced benefits to the business. The main advantage is that the business need not maintain on site staff to answer the PBX system. Instead of calling features, virtual service can be used to send and receive fax messages. As it requires less up-front and running costs, it may be the right solution for an NA area or regional phone line.

SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

System administration is done through an online dashboard. The administrator logs in over the internet to a secure gateway. User ID is normally either the toll free number or local number and the password is assigned by the company. The password may be changed by the administrator.

The first step in administration is to determine the use of the extensions and mailboxes.

EG: Dial 1 for information about Narcotics Anonymous.

At the beginning of each meeting we read some information about NA.

- If you're not familiar with Narcotics Anonymous you can hear a brief explanation of what to expect at meetings.
 - press 1 to hear "An Introduction to NA Meetings"
 - Press 2 to hear "Who is an Addict"
 - Press 3 to hear "What is Narcotics Anonymous?"
 - Press 4 to hear "We Do Recover"

Dial 2 for meeting times and locations

- Press 1 for meetings Monday through Thursday
 - Press 1 for Monday
 - Press 2 for Tuesday
 - Press 3 for Wednesday
 - Press 5 for Thursday
- Press 2 for meetings Friday through Sunday
 - Press 1 for Friday
 - Press 2 for Saturday
 - Press 3 for Sunday

Dial 3 for fun activities.

- Press 1 dances, picnics, and other activities
- Press 2 for Unity day
- Press 3 for holiday marathon meetings.

Press 4 to be transferred recovering addict volunteer

Press 5 for the Area Service Voice Mailbox

Area Service meets at ____ PM on the _____ at (address) Please leave a message after the tone

Press 6 for Hospitals and Institutions Sub-committee

Press 7 for Public Relations Sub-committee

Press 8 for Activities

Press 9 for Newsletter

The second step is to write the scripts that will be recorded. Once written the phone line committee should review and approve the scripts. The scripts will then need to be recorded on the system. The various providers will provide unique instructions for completing the recordings. If your needs require additional extensions or mailboxes these are usually available at an additional cost.

The 3rd step is to enter the call forwarding instructions for the various volunteers. This requires the time and day of week that the request to speak with a live addict will be forwarded to a specific number. You may also have backup volunteers for each shift. It is necessary to enter backup volunteer information after primary volunteer information so that calls will be forwarded in the right sequence. It is suggested that you maintain an updated list of the volunteers at all times since the on line forwarding may not show the volunteer's name, just the time and number to forward to.

The administrator will have the ability to go online and see up to the minute call information, get reports on call statistics, check messages, and view the bill. Providers require a credit card on file with them to automatically debit for the monthly fee. Many will accept a deposit in lieu of a credit card.

Virtual PBX system can be connected to local numbers and/or toll free numbers. If the help line already has a number, it can be connected to the virtual phone system, but it may require remote call forwarding. This will depend on the capabilities of the provider. Virtual phone system can be activated within a short time. Various communication service providers offer virtual PBX systems with a wide array of service packages. You can choose the provider with the best options that suit your requirements. Sometimes this will require choosing the provider that comes closest since none may be a perfect match.

In transitioning from an older technology to a virtual system it may take a while to complete. Most providers of Virtual PBX Hosted systems are not full-fledged telephone carriers. For this reason they may not be able to transfer your existing number to their service. In order to continue to use the existing number until the new number is well publicized the existing number may be converted to a remote call forwarding number by the phone company. The existing number will then ring to the new number. (There are costs involved.) Once the new number has been well publicized you may want to turn off the remote call forwarding number. This depends on a number of factors:

- How many calls are still being forwarded from the old number?
- Whether or not there is a cost to list the new number in information.
- Has the telephone directory listing been updated?
- Is the new number on the schedule?

- Is the new number shown on the area/regional web page?
- Has your area notified local organizations that refer addicts to NA? Treatment centers, drug courts, probation, parole, halfway houses, detoxification units, hospital emergency rooms, etc.

Changing the listing can be a time consuming effort because the provider may not have a complete understanding of the process. The phone company cannot do it since they usually are not providing the number. The provider has to go to the company that sells local numbers to them and request that they update the listing. (This is for the US only. Other countries will have to find out their local process) If the phone number is listed in the Yellow Pages and other competing directories those listings should be corrected before the next printing as well.

Making the decision to use a Virtual PBX will usually improve service and save money. However, it is a process that requires thorough planning and careful implementation.