Why Schools are Switching to a Cloud Telephone System

INTRODUCTION

Today's schools are under relentless pressure to provide additional support and value to students and parents, while at the same time reduce overhead and operating costs, identify efficiencies, recruit and retain capable staff, and drive ongoing innovation and growth.

In light of these mounting and in some cases unprecedented pressures – which are presumably only going to increase in the future – it is not surprising that a growing number of schools have opted to switch from a traditional landline phone system, to a Cloud Telephone System (sometimes called a VoIP or IP-PBX phone system).

In this informative yet quick-to-read ebook, we highlight 10 key reasons why this is a clearly a step in the right direction for schools, staff, and students.

SUBSTANTIAL COST SAVINGS

Organizations in every industry – education, healthcare, and the list goes on – have a duty, and in many cases a fiduciary obligation, to responsibly and appropriately lower and control costs. Doing so allows them to maximize existing capital and resources, and support future growth and innovation.

A Cloud Telephone System aligns perfectly with this core objective for schools, as it enables substantial cost savings that literally begin accruing on day one. Here are the reasons why:

- Compared to an on-premise conventional phone system, hardware costs are minimal and affordable, and typically include a customized mix of handsets (a.k.a. IP phones), managed routers and back-up power supplies. The PBX that drives the system is stored, maintained and managed by the Cloud Telephone System Solution Provider at their secured location.

- There are no maintenance or upgrade fees of any kind. Ongoing innovations, such as new calling features, are also provided at no cost.

- There is no risk of purchasing phone lines that will not be used. Additional licenses can be purchased on an as-needed basis.

- There is no need to establish a help desk, or designate IT staff to spend their valuable time configuring or optimizing the system. All technical support is provided by the Cloud Telephone System Solution Provider.

- There are no domestic long distance costs for any administrator, teacher or other employee using the system – regardless of whether they are located on campus, or anywhere else in the state or across the country.

While the total cost savings depends on variables and factors that are specific to each school (i.e. number of phone numbers required, number of employees, volume of long distance calls made, etc.), in our experience the savings vs. a traditional phone system can easily reach 50 percent. And as noted above, these savings are not forecasted years into the future. The path to ROI starts the day the Cloud Telephone System launches.

FUTURE-PROOFED INVESTMENT

When making any kind of technology investment, a primary consideration – and prudent concern – of schools is whether the investment is future-proofed. Regardless of how beneficial and advantageous technology is today, the last thing that schools want to discover is that their once "leading edge" and "state of the art" solution is obsolete (or on the fast-track to obsolescence).

With a Cloud Telephone System, schools get the investment protection they want and require, because there are no costs for upgrades, maintenance and innovations. As noted, these are continuously and proactively handled (i.e. schools do not have to request them) by their hosted Cloud Telephone System Solutions Provider.

Indeed, traditionally many schools have been obligated to spend upwards of $100,000 — or more — on a brand new phone system about every five years. With a Cloud Telephone System, this massive expense is completely eliminated. Schools can use that capital to fund high priority goals and objectives.

CAMPUS-WIDE CONNECTIVITY

Often, schools are spread out over a campus environment. This typically leads to major connectivity problems when using a traditional phone system, as the only way to connect buildings is by using old wire, installing Centrex lines (which act as a forwarding service), or installing point-to-point T1 lines.
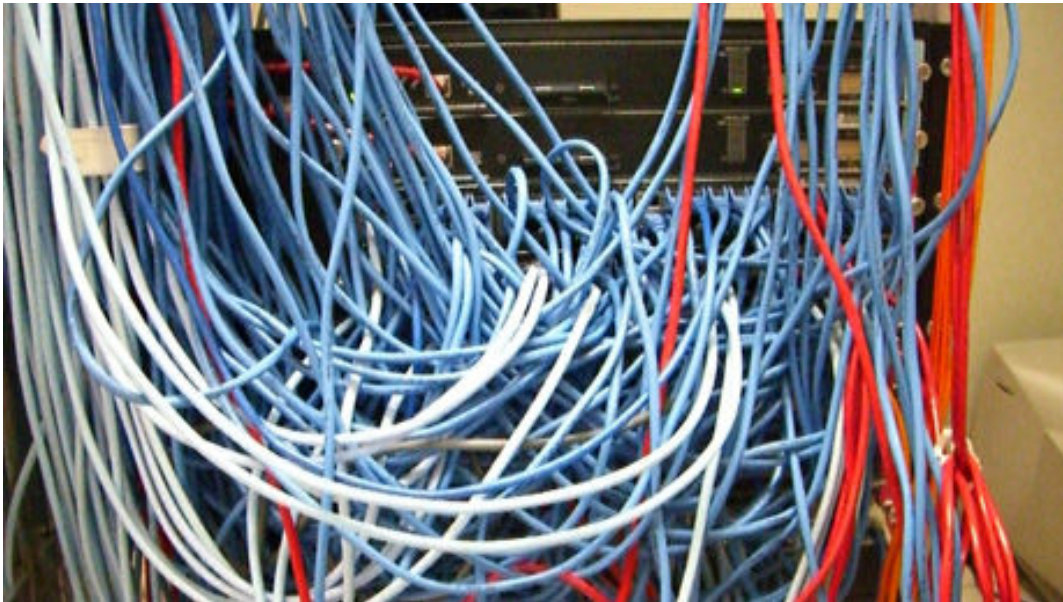
All of these are very costly methods, and are inconvenient as well since staff deployment and re-deployments have to be managed in light of connectivity limitations.

However, with a Cloud Telephone System, schools enjoy immediate, seamless campus-wide connectivity -- regardless of whether the campus is a few or dozens of acres in size. There are simply no wires or cables to install, as all connectivity is cloud-based.

CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY

With a traditional phone system, schools are vulnerable to having their entire campus-wide communication system go down when:

- There is a problem with the infrastructure supporting a single building.
- There is power outage affecting the phone company (e.g. during a storm).

This is a major safety and security risk, and can be very alarming for parents. It is also an ongoing struggle for many schools that routinely experience "brown outs".

With a Cloud Telephone System, schools are not vulnerable to these risks. This is because offices, classrooms and buildings are not connected with wires or cables, and also because Cloud Telephone System Solution Providers use geographically dispersed cloud-based infrastructure.

As such, a local power outage does not render the system offline, and administrators, teachers and other staff can continue making and receiving calls -- even as other schools in the same city or region that use a traditional phone system cannot.

Furthermore, in addition to 99.99% guaranteed system uptime, schools get 24/7/365 access to e911 service, which connects them to emergency services (police, fire, ambulance, etc.) without delay or disruption. This aspect is managed by their hosted Cloud Telephone System Solution Provider, and there is no additional cost.

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ON-DEMAND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

As noted above in the discussion regarding cost savings and investment protection, with a Cloud Telephone System schools are not required to maintain a help desk, or direct IT staff to spend their valuable time maintaining or optimizing the system. All details and issues regarding usage, features, functionality, support, and maintenance are completely handled by the Cloud Telephone System Solution Provider.
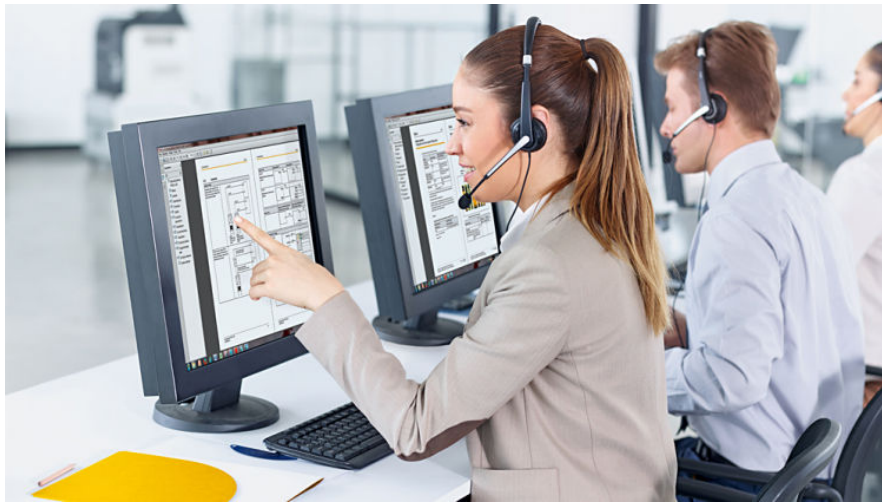
In addition, there are six more service-related aspects of Cloud Telephone System that are particularly important to schools, including:

- Service is provided by a single partner, and as such there is no need for schools to manage and maintain multiple relationships and agreements.
- Service is offered 24/7/365, and not just during traditional operating hours/days.
- Service is delivered by trained and experienced telecommunications experts, not by call center agents.
- Service is highly responsive and efficient, in order to minimize time-to-resolution (TTR).
- Many service issues can be resolved remotely, either exclusively by support staff, or through step-by-step screen sharing (this is typically used when an administrator, teacher or staff member needs some coaching to use a system feature).
- As required, service teams can be dispatched on-site the same day, or the next day (depending on when the inquiry is made).

TOTAL MOBILITY

We have already highlighted that a Cloud Telephone System enables connectivity between buildings. Yet it is important to add that administrators, teachers and staff are not limited to making and receiving calls from within buildings, as they would with traditional phone systems.

Rather, they can roam across and beyond the campus, and stay connected to colleagues – and within direct reach of parents – either via an IP-Phone (which they would typically use within each building), or an app on their smartphone (which they would use everywhere else). Switching between devices is simple and seamless, and no configuration is required.

And speaking of direct reach with parents: they can be given DIDs ("direct inward dial') numbers that connect them directly to a teacher or department, without having to dial a main number.

SYSTEM INTEGRATION

In addition to seamless integration between devices, a Cloud Telephone System integrates with other systems into the school information ecosystem, such as Lync, Google Apps, database applications, and more.

This not only drives efficiency and data management, but it helps schools drive innovation and establish themselves as a progressive, leading-edge organization. This is a major benefit to students and current staff, and can go a long way towards recruiting top-tier educators and impressing parents!

AUTO ATTENDANT

With a Cloud Telephone System, schools can utilize a built-in Auto Attendant to answer common questions from parents, as well as to relay school announcements -- including those that are scheduled in advance, such as holiday announcements. They can also easily configure the Auto Attendant to direct parents to a desired party, such as operations, administration, the athletic department, and so on.

Furthermore, Auto Attendant settings (announcements, directories, etc.), can be changed remotely via a web-based portal. This is particularly beneficial when parents need to be advised of late-breaking news, such as weather-related issues or closures.

ADVANCED CALLING FEATURES

With a traditional phone system, schools must pay for advanced calling features. Or in some cases, depending on where they are located and the capacity of their provider, they may not have access to certain advanced features at all.

However, with a Cloud Telephone System, schools – regardless of where they are located – can access a suite of advanced calling features, including (but not limited to):

- Voicemail to email and voicemail to text; both of which allow administrators, teachers and other staff access voicemails on-the-go and respond sooner.
- Video conferencing to engage parents and other partners. This feature can also be used for parents to connect directly with their child from anywhere in the world.
- Call forwarding, which allows calls to be routed to any phone – including landlines at home or elsewhere.
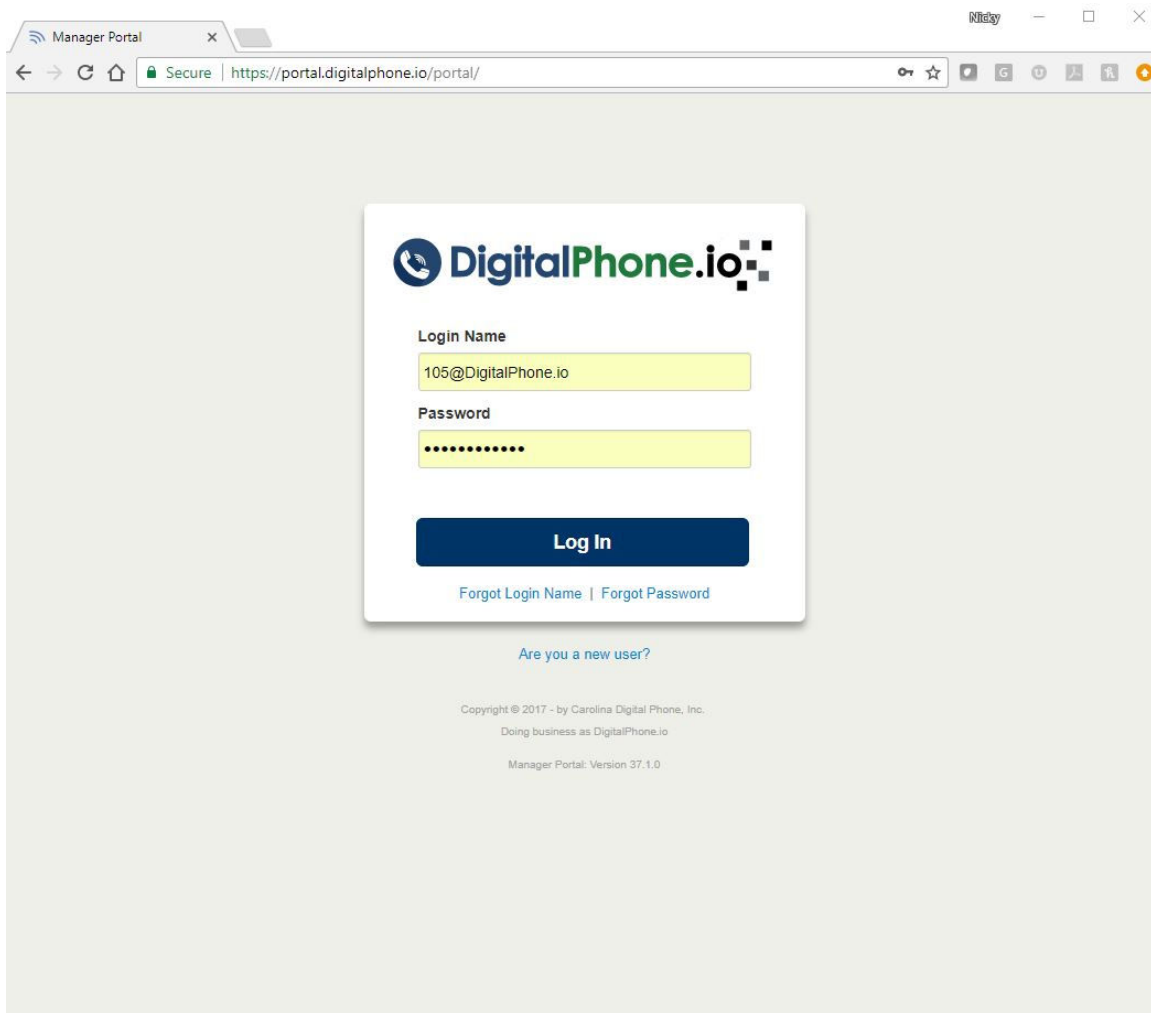

Once again, all of these advanced calling features are standard. Schools do not pay extra, nor do they have to worry that other schools may be getting "special features" that they are not.

FULL REMOTE MANAGEMENT

As noted previously, administrators, teachers or other authorized staff can change the Cloud Telephone System Auto Attendant from any location. However, that is not all that they can do from a distance.

Essentially any aspect of the system can be modified remotely, and with any device, through a simple web-based portal. Individuals in charge of managing the system can also track usage, assign/re-assign extensions, set restrictions (e.g. geographic limits beyond which calls cannot be made/received, maximum call durations, etc.), and more.

CONCLUSION

While every school is unique, all of them are reaping substantial and ongoing benefits from switching to a Cloud Telephone System. As covered in this ebook, these include:

- ✓ **SUBSTANTIAL COST SAVINGS**
- ✓ **FUTURE-PROOFED INVESTMENT**
- ✓ **CAMPUS-WIDE CONNECTIVITY**
- ✓ **CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY**
- ✓ **ON-DEMAND TECHNICAL SUPPORT**
- ✓ **TOTAL MOBILITY**
- ✓ **SYSTEM INTEGRATION**
- ✓ **AUTO ATTENDANT**
- ✓ **ADVANCED CALLING FEATURES**
- ✓ **FULL REMOTE MANAGEMENT**

Conventional legacy on-premise PBX phone systems are excessively costly, restrictive and inflexible — which means that they're a liability instead of an asset. On the other end of the spectrum, an advanced, future-proofed and feature-rich Cloud Telephone System from DigitalPhone.io dramatically reduces costs, increases productivity, and empowers your staff with the next generation unified calling technologies they need to succeed!

To learn more about how your school or school board can reap these transformative rewards, contact the DigitalPhone.io team today. Your consultation with us is free!

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