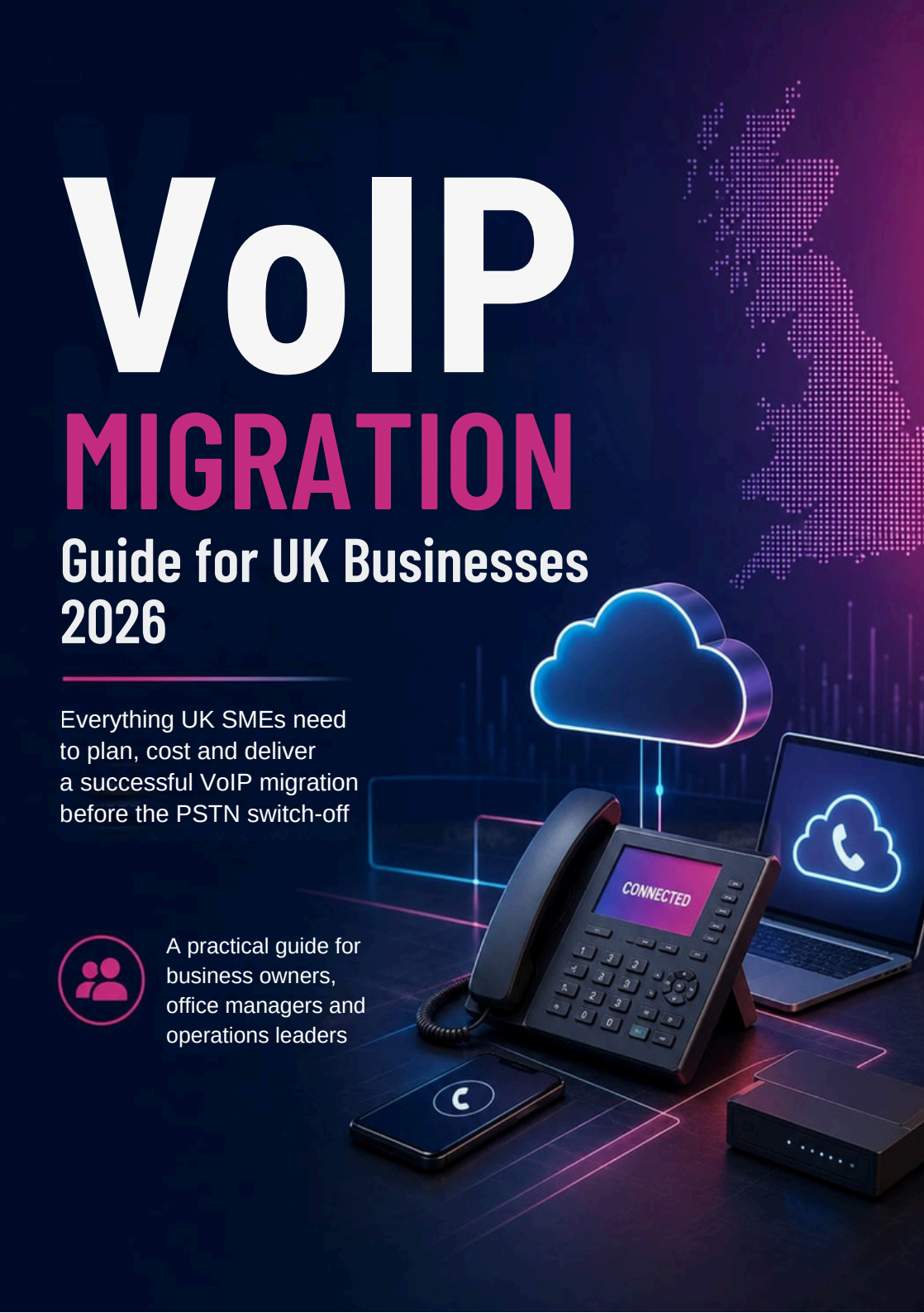
VoIP MIGRATION

Guide for UK Businesses 2026

Everything UK SMEs need to plan, cost and deliver a successful VoIP migration before the PSTN switch-off

A practical guide for business owners, office managers and operations leaders



THE CLOCK IS RUNNING

Every traditional business phone line in the UK is being switched off. By the end of January 2027, BT will have completed the withdrawal of its analogue and ISDN networks the platform that has carried British business calls for forty years. From that date, ISDN, traditional PBX systems, and analogue lines simply stop working. There is no extension. There is no negotiation. There is no plan B. If your business is still running on traditional telephony, you need a migration plan in place this year. Not because someone in IT thinks it's a good idea, but because the country's telecoms infrastructure is being decommissioned underneath you, on a published timetable. The good news: the alternative, Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP, is dramatically cheaper, more flexible, and better integrated with the way modern businesses actually work.

The PSTN switch-off what you actually need to know
BT has already stopped selling new ISDN lines. The full PSTN withdrawal completes in January 2027. Most regions are seeing service degradation already, Stop Sell zones rolling out across the UK, no new lines, no upgrades, only "like-for-like" replacements until the final cut-off. Businesses that delay until late 2026 will compete with everyone else for installation slots, with predictable consequences for cost and quality.

This guide explains what VoIP is in plain English, what it costs compared to traditional telephony, what the common myths and concerns actually amount to, what to look for in a provider, and what a good migration looks like. It is written for the people who actually make these decisions in UK SMEs, business owners, office managers, finance directors and operations leaders, not for telecoms specialists.

Use this guide as

- A briefing document for your leadership team or board.
- A self-assessment of where your business stands today and what needs doing.
- A cost comparison between your current setup and the realistic VoIP alternative.
- A specification for what to ask any provider before you sign.

Want a free VoIP cost comparison for your business?
Send us a copy of your current phone bill and we'll produce a like-for-like comparison against modern VoIP, same call volumes, same features, same number of users with the typical monthly saving and the realistic switching effort. Usually back to you within three working days. No commitment, no obligation.

- Request your free VoIP cost comparison at systemforce.co.uk

VOIP, IN PLAIN ENGLISH

VoIP, Voice over Internet Protocol, means making and receiving phone calls over your internet connection rather than a dedicated telephone line. The voice is converted to digital data, sent over the internet, and converted back to audio at the other end. The technology has been around for over twenty years and now carries the majority of business calls worldwide.

From the user's perspective, very little changes. You still pick up a handset (or a headset, or your laptop, or your mobile), dial a number, and have a conversation. The phone still rings. The voicemail still works. Caller display still shows who's calling. What changes is everything underneath: how the call gets there, what it costs, where the system runs, and what else it can do.

What VoIP enables that traditional telephony doesn't

- Take your office number anywhere, desk phone, laptop softphone, mobile app, same number, same caller ID.
- Add or remove users in minutes, not weeks. No new line installations, no engineer visits.
- Open new sites, hire remote workers, or restructure teams without rewiring anything.
- Get features that used to cost extra, call recording, voicemail-to-email, hunt groups, IVR menus, analytics, included as standard.
- Integrate with Microsoft Teams, your CRM, your help-desk software, your calendar.
- Replace your business mobile bill with softphone apps that ring on the same numbers.
- Keep your existing phone numbers there's no need to print new business cards.

Three flavours of VoIP for UK SMEs

1. **Cloud-hosted (the modern default)**
   The phone system runs entirely in your provider's cloud, no on-premises hardware, no server, no software to maintain. Users connect via desk phones, mobile apps, or softphones on their computers. This is what most UK SMEs migrate to in 2026, and the model the rest of this guide is largely written around.

2. On-premises VoIP

The phone system runs on a server in your office building, but uses VoIP technology rather than analogue or ISDN. Less common in 2026 because it inherits the maintenance overhead of the old PBX while giving up the flexibility of cloud. Sometimes appropriate for very large or sector-specific deployments rarely the right answer for an SME.

3. Hybrid

A blend some users on cloud, others on a local appliance, often during a phased migration from a legacy on-premises system. Useful as a transition state but not usually a destination.

THE FIVE REAL BENEFITS OF VOIP

Every VoIP provider's website talks about the benefits of VoIP. This section focuses on the five that actually matter when you sit down and look at the numbers and the operating reality of your business.

1. **Material monthly cost reduction**
   Most UK SMEs cut their telephony costs by 50–80% when they migrate from traditional ISDN or analogue to a properly chosen VoIP service. The savings come from three places: line rental disappears, call charges drop dramatically (most VoIP plans include UK landline and mobile minutes as standard), and feature upgrades that used to cost extra are bundled in. The cost-comparison table later in this guide gives the typical numbers for a 15-user business.

2. **Genuine flexibility for hybrid and remote teams**
   Traditional telephony was built for a building. Staff sat at fixed desks; calls came to those desks; if you moved, an engineer came out. VoIP is built for people. Your business number rings on whichever device you're logged into the desk phone in the office, the softphone on your laptop at home, the mobile app on your phone in the car. The same number, the same caller ID, the same call recording. For businesses with any kind of remote, hybrid or multi-site working, this is transformative.

3. **Features that used to be enterprise-only, included as standard**
   Call recording. Voicemail to email. Auto attendants and IVR menus. Hunt groups and ring strategies. Analytics dashboards. Integration with Microsoft Teams. CRM screen pops. International numbers. None of these used to be standard they were paid add-ons or required separate systems. On modern VoIP they come included, and the SMEs that take advantage of them get genuine productivity gains. The SMEs that don't are still benefiting from the cost savings.

4. **Easier to scale up and easier to scale down**
   Adding a new user to a traditional phone system meant ordering a new line, scheduling an engineer, and waiting weeks. Adding a new user to a cloud VoIP service means logging into a portal and clicking add. The same applies in reverse when staff numbers fluctuate, when you open or close sites, when teams reorganise. Telephony stops being the slow constraint on operational change.

5. Future-proof against the PSTN switch-off

The most defensive benefit, but the one with the firmest deadline. Every business has to migrate before January 2027. Doing it on a planned basis, with the provider you've chosen and the timeline that suits you, is dramatically better than doing it under deadline pressure when service availability is constrained. The businesses that move early get better choice, better pricing, and unhurried implementations.

SFIT observation: of the five benefits, the cost reduction is what gets the conversation started but it's the flexibility benefit that businesses end up valuing most. The phrase we hear most often, twelve months after a migration, is some version of "I didn't realise how much our phones used to limit us."

THE FOUR OBJECTIONS / AND WHAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE

Almost every conversation about VoIP migration includes the same four concerns. They are reasonable questions, VoIP is different from what people are used to. They also have specific, evidence-based answers.

"Won't the call quality be worse?"

On a properly configured business connection, no VoIP call quality is indistinguishable from, and often clearer than, traditional telephony. Modern codecs sample voice at higher quality than the legacy PSTN ever did.

The myth comes from poor early implementations on consumer broadband without Quality of Service (QoS) configuration. On a business-grade connection with QoS in place, VoIP is the higher-quality option.

The honest caveat: if your internet connection is genuinely poor, slow, unreliable, contended, VoIP will expose that. The fix is to address the connection, not avoid VoIP. Most reputable VoIP providers will run a connection test before quoting; some will refuse to install if your line isn't suitable, which is a quality signal in itself.

"What happens if our internet goes down?"

It's the right question, and the answer is: a properly designed VoIP deployment has automatic failover. Calls divert to mobile numbers, to alternative offices, to a backup internet circuit, or to the provider's hosted auto-attendant depending on what's been configured.

The same scenario on a traditional phone system means dead lines, with no failover at all. VoIP is no more vulnerable to internet outages than your email is and most businesses have been working through internet outages successfully for years.

Resilience-conscious businesses add a backup internet connection (a different provider, often a 4G/5G failover) so that telephony and email both keep working through a single-circuit failure. The total cost of this is typically £30–£60 per month a small price to underwrite the entire business communications stack.

"Is VoIP secure?"

Modern business VoIP is encrypted in transit (TLS for signalling, SRTP for voice), authenticated at every endpoint, and centrally monitored by the provider.

Security is one area where cloud VoIP is materially better than legacy telephony fraud detection, abnormal-call-pattern alerting, automatic blocking of premium-rate destinations are all standard. Toll fraud was a recurring problem on legacy on-premises PBX systems; on a properly run cloud VoIP service, it's vanishingly rare.

The one genuine risk area is account compromise if an attacker gets into your VoIP admin portal, they can route calls maliciously. The fix is the same as for every other cloud service: MFA on the admin account, strong passwords, monitoring of admin actions. Same discipline, same outcome.

"It sounds disruptive we can't afford the downtime"

A properly planned VoIP migration involves zero phone-system downtime. The new service is built and tested in parallel with the old. Numbers are ported over once everything is verified.

The cutover is a single coordinated event usually outside business hours after which incoming calls land on the new system. Staff have been trained in advance. Old handsets are removed at leisure. Disruption is measured in minutes, not days.

Migrations that go badly invariably trace back to two things: rushed planning, or under-resourced providers cutting corners. Neither is inherent to VoIP both are inherent to choosing the wrong partner for the work.

COST COMPARISON: TRADITIONAL VS VOIP

Below is a typical cost comparison for a 15-user UK business migrating from traditional ISDN/analogue telephony to modern cloud VoIP. The figures are indicative your actual costs will vary by call volumes, included features, and provider, but the shape of the comparison is consistent across most SME deployments we see.

Cost element (15-user business, per month)	Traditional	VoIP / cloud
Line rental (ISDN30 or equivalent)	£250	£0
Per-user / per-extension licensing	£0–£75	£150–£225
Call charges (UK landline + mobile)	£200–£400	Often inclusive
System maintenance / hardware support	£100–£200	£0 (cloud-managed)
Hardware capital depreciation (PBX over 5 years)	£100–£250	£0–£40 (handsets only)
Mobile / softphone integration	£75–£150 (separate)	£0 (included)
Voicemail-to-email, call recording, analytics	£75–£200 (add-ons)	£0 (standard)
Multi-site / remote worker support	£200+ per site	£0 (location-agnostic)
Typical monthly total	**£1,000–£1,525**	**£150–£265**
Typical 3-year total cost of ownership	**£36,000–£55,000**	**£5,400–£9,500**

What this means: for a typical 15-user SME, migrating to VoIP saves roughly £750–£1,250 per month between £9,000 and £15,000 per year. Over a three-year horizon (the typical contract term), the saving runs to £30,000–£45,000. That is for like-for-like service. The features upgrade is on top.

How to calculate yours

Three ways to estimate your own number quickly:

1. Take your current monthly telephony bill (line rental + call charges + maintenance + mobile bills if separate). Multiply by 0.20–0.40 to estimate your VoIP equivalent. The difference is your monthly saving.

2. Use a per-user benchmark. Modern UK business VoIP averages £10–£15 per user per month for a feature-rich plan with inclusive UK calling. Multiply by your user count for a ballpark.

3. Send your phone bill to a reputable provider for a like-for-like quote. Most reputable providers (including SFIT) will produce a costed comparison within a few working days, free of charge.

What's not in the table:

the productivity gains from features that didn't previously exist, call recording, analytics, Teams integration, mobile working, are real but harder to quantify in advance. Most businesses we've migrated report that those gains, by themselves, would have justified the move even if the cost had stayed the same. Treat them as upside on top of the headline saving.

TWELVE QUESTIONS TO ASK ANY VOIP PROVIDER

VoIP is a more competitive market than traditional telephony, which is good news for cost and bad news for buyers, because the noise level is higher. Cheap headline prices often hide expensive add-ons, restrictive contracts, or poor support. The questions below cut through that. Use the table as a scoring matrix when comparing two or more providers.

Question to ask the provider	Why it matters	Weight
Where is your platform hosted, and is it UK-based?	GDPR, latency, support hours	Critical
What is your published platform uptime SLA, and over what period?	99.99% over a year is very different from 99.9% over a month	Critical
How is voice quality protected if our internet connection has issues?	QoS configuration, failover to mobile, call routing	Critical
Is the contract month-to-month, or does it lock us in for 36–60 months?	Long lock-ins are a red flag in 2026	Critical
What are the per-second / per-minute call rates, and what's inclusive?	Hidden call costs are the most common surprise	Important
How is number portability handled when we move?	Some providers make leaving expensive	Important
Do you provide handsets, or do we buy them? Are they ours afterwards?	Avoid paying twice for hardware	Important
What's included for free vs charged extra (call recording, analytics, voicemail-to-email)?	Apparent low cost often comes with paid add-ons	Important
Is the system integrated with Microsoft Teams / our CRM out of the box?	Integration is where the real productivity gains sit	Important
Who provides technical support, and from where?	UK-based support during your hours, not outsourced overnight	Important
How are software updates and security patches managed?	Should be automatic and inclusive	Useful
Can you provide reference customers in our sector?	Sector-specific deployments matter for nuance	Useful

How to use it: ask each provider all twelve questions. Score each answer 0 (unsatisfactory), 1 (acceptable) or 2 (strong). Weight the scores: Critical questions count triple, Important questions count double, Useful questions count once. The provider with the highest weighted total is rarely the cheapest but they are usually the right answer.

Red flags to walk away from

- 60-month contracts with significant early-termination penalties the market norm for SMEs is now 12–36 months.
- Vague or non-specific SLAs "high availability" is not an SLA, 99.99% uptime over 12 months is.
- Hardware that becomes worthless if you switch providers handsets should be unlocked or buyable from you outright.
- Heavily front-loaded pricing "first 6 months free" often means a price hike when you're locked in.
- Refusal to provide reference customers, particularly in your sector or region.
- UK-fronted operations with offshore-only support outside business hours.
- "Free" handsets that are non-portable, low-grade, or tied to the provider's contract.

WHAT A GOOD MIGRATION ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

A well-run VoIP migration is a project with clearly defined phases, a single accountable lead, documented user training, and a managed cutover. Below is the structure we follow at System Force IT it is the process every reputable provider should be able to describe in similar detail.

Phase 1: Discovery (1–2 weeks)

- Audit of current telephony, lines, numbers, users, call patterns, integrations, contracts.
- Internet connection survey, bandwidth, latency, jitter, QoS capability.
- Site visits where appropriate, particularly for multi-site or older buildings.
- Stakeholder interviews, what works, what doesn't, what features are missing.
- Documented as-is and to-be design, signed off by the business.

Phase 2: Build (2–4 weeks)

- Provisioning of the new VoIP service in parallel with the existing system.
- User accounts created, call routing configured, voicemail set up, hunt groups defined.
- Integrations configured, Microsoft Teams, CRM, helpdesk, calendar.
- Hardware ordered, desk phones, headsets, conference units.
- Test calls performed across all routing scenarios; quality verified.

Phase 3: Training and pilot (1 week)

- User training delivered, softphone apps, mobile apps, desk phones, key features.
- Pilot group runs both systems in parallel for a few days; issues fixed before full cutover.
- Reception, switchboard and customer-facing teams given dedicated training time.
- User documentation provided, quick-reference guides, video walkthroughs.

Phase 4: Cutover (single coordinated event)

- Number porting from old provider typically scheduled for an evening or weekend.
- Calls verified incoming and outgoing on the new system within minutes of port completion.
- Old service kept active in parallel for 24–48 hours as fallback.
- Floor-walking support on the first business day after cutover.

Phase 5: Stabilise and optimise (4 weeks)

- Daily monitoring of call quality and any issues raised.
- Tuning of routing, hunt groups, and IVRs based on real usage.
- Old hardware removed; old contracts terminated.
- Post-implementation review with the business, what worked, what to adjust.

Total elapsed time: 8–12 weeks for a typical 15–50-user UK SME. Larger or multi-site deployments may take longer. Migrations promised in two weeks are almost always cutting corners usually on training, testing, or both.

Worried you've left the migration too late?
We're booking VoIP migrations through 2026 with realistic delivery windows. The earlier in the year you commit, the more flexibility you have on cutover timing, hardware availability, and contract terms. The closer you get to the PSTN switch-off in January 2027, the more constrained those choices become.

- Book a free VoIP migration consultation at systemforce.co.uk

COMMON PITFALLS (AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)

Every VoIP migration we've seen go badly traces back to one of the patterns below. None are inherent to VoIP technology all are avoidable with the right partner and a properly resourced project.

- Choosing on price alone and then learning what's not included after the contract is signed.
- Inadequate internet connection VoIP exposes connection issues that browsing email never did.
- Missing a critical integration discovering the day after cutover that the system doesn't talk to the CRM.
- Poor user training staff fall back on mobiles instead of using the new system properly.
- No failover plan the day the internet drops, everyone learns there isn't one.
- Number porting badly handled temporary loss of incoming calls, customer confusion.
- Old hardware quietly retained on "just in case" nobody notices until the contract auto-renews.
- No call recording compliance review discovering after go-live that recordings need consent flags or specific retention.
- Ignoring the international dimension overseas offices, suppliers or customers needing local presence numbers.
- Migrating during peak season retail at Christmas, accountants in tax season, schools at exam time.

The pattern: almost every VoIP migration that goes wrong was either rushed, under-scoped, or led by a provider chosen on cost alone. Time spent on discovery and provider selection is the single highest-ROI investment in the project.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

VoIP fundamentals are the same across sectors, but the priorities and the watch-outs vary. The table below summarises what we typically see when migrating businesses in each sector.

Sector	What matters most	Watch out for
Professional services	Microsoft Teams integration, call recording, mobile/hybrid working	Compliance for call recording (FCA, legal sector)
Retail / hospitality	Multi-site, queueing, fast call answering, analytics	Cheap consumer-grade kit dressed up as business VoIP
Manufacturing / trade	Resilient to power/internet outages, intercom-style features	Old buildings with poor connectivity site survey essential
Healthcare / clinical	Privacy, recording compliance, integration with practice management	GDPR around recordings, NHS-compatible suppliers
Financial services	FCA-compliant call recording, retention, search/replay	Generic VoIP often falls short of FCA requirements
Multi-site / remote teams	Cloud-first, location-agnostic, mobile and desktop apps	Bandwidth at home offices, training across distributed staff

SFIT observation: the businesses where VoIP migrations go most smoothly are the ones that involved the right operational stakeholders early, receptionists, customer service leads, sales managers, not just IT and finance. The people answering the phones every day know things about the current system that nobody else does, and ignoring that knowledge is the most reliable way to discover it the hard way after cutover.

YOUR VOIP MIGRATION READINESS CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to assess where your business stands today. Tick the boxes you can already evidence; the unticked ones are your project plan.

Before you start

- Current telephony fully audited, lines, numbers, users, call volumes, contracts, end dates.
- Internet connection assessed for VoIP suitability (bandwidth, latency, QoS).
- Stakeholders identified, IT, finance, operations, customer-facing teams, reception.
- Budget agreed at board or director level.
- PSTN switch-off implications understood including any Stop Sell zone affecting your area.

Provider selection

- At least two providers shortlisted using the twelve-question matrix in this guide.
- Reference customers contacted in your sector or business size.
- Contract terms reviewed by someone who knows what to look for.
- Hardware ownership and portability confirmed in writing.
- SLAs documented and understood, uptime, support response, escalation.

Migration delivery

- Single accountable project lead identified internal or supplier-side.
- Migration plan documented with phases, milestones, and named owners.
- User training scheduled and resourced before cutover.
- Number porting timeline confirmed in writing including fallback if it fails.
- Failover plan agreed what happens if internet, power or platform fails.
- Cutover date chosen sensitively outside peak business periods.

After go-live

- First-day floor-walking support arranged.
- Call quality monitored over first 30 days provider-side and user-side.
- Old service formally terminated no auto-renewal surprises.
- Old hardware removed and disposed of (or sold/recycled).
- Post-implementation review held, what worked, what to refine.

HOW SYSTEM FORCE IT CAN HELP

VoIP is one of our strongest service areas we have migrated UK SMEs across professional services, manufacturing, healthcare, retail and digital sectors from legacy telephony to modern cloud-based platforms. We deliver migrations as projects, not as drop-and-go installations, with the discovery, training, and post-cutover support that determines whether the new system actually works for the business.

System Force IT delivers:

- Free VoIP cost comparisons like-for-like analysis against your current bill, typically returned within three working days.
- Free site and connection surveys verifying that your business is ready before any commitment.
- Cloud-hosted VoIP with UK platform, UK support, transparent SLAs, and sensible contract terms.
- Microsoft Teams Phone integration for businesses already standardised on Teams.
- Multi-site, hybrid and remote-worker deployments.
- Number porting management including from problematic incumbents.
- Ongoing support, training and feature optimisation post-migration.

Book a free VoIP migration consultation
One of our VoIP specialists will spend 45 minutes understanding your current telephony, your operational priorities, and your timeline. We'll follow up with a written cost comparison, a recommended migration approach, and a realistic delivery window. Free of charge, no commitment, and the comparison is yours regardless of whether you choose to engage further.

- Book your free VoIP consultation at systemforce.co.uk

Or call us directly: 01452 701355 We're based in Gloucestershire and migrate UK SMEs ahead of the PSTN switch-off.

Authoritative sources and further reading

- Ofcom PSTN switch-off and migration guidance: ofcom.org.uk
- BT PSTN withdrawal programme updates: business.bt.com
- Federation of Communication Services: fcs.org.uk
- ICO call recording and GDPR guidance: ico.org.uk
- FCA call recording requirements for regulated firms: fca.org.uk

This document is provided for general guidance only. Cost figures are typical UK SME ranges based on industry data and our own deployment experience; actual costs vary significantly by provider, plan, call volume and feature set.

PSTN switch-off dates are correct at time of writing but subject to update by Openreach and BT — verify current status before making time-sensitive decisions.

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Want a free VoIP migration consultation with System Force IT?

We run free, no-obligation reviews for UK SMEs.
Written report in 7 working days.
No sales pitch, no follow-up unless you ask for one.

Book at systemforce.co.uk
Or call us directly: 01452 701355

System Force IT | supporting UK businesses since 2006.

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01452701355

www.systemforce.co.uk

sales@systemforce.co.uk

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01452701355
www.systemforce.co.uk
sales@systemforce.co.uk