



The Big Switch Off Best Practice Plan - Take action now

Introduction

In 2017 it was announced that the UK would transition to a fully digital communications network.

That migration is now more than half complete – and it could have profound implications for your organisation.

Openreach has already stopped selling many well-known communications services at hundreds of exchanges across the country.

| Which means that your communications strategy could be in danger.

Digital services built on SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) will replace older PSTN networks (Public Switched Telephone Network), providing more capacity, higher speeds and a wide range of flexible features and benefits to customers.

However, there is work to be done to make this transition happen, and research by Cavell suggests that more than 20% of businesses are in serious danger of being left behind. Should this happen, affected organisations will be forced into an emergency migration and left to manage the impact of all the uncertainty that an unplanned migration entails.





As more exchanges stop selling new ISDN connections (Integrated Services Digital Network), more businesses will join the rush towards digital communications.

This enormous surge in demand will stretch resources to the limit – and could result in significant lead times and delays for those organisations who leave it too late to migrate.

The move to hosted voice is unavoidable – but it is also highly desirable for your business. In fact, the potential benefits – reduced costs, increased productivity, new ways of working, greater flexibility – are all available right now.

Which means that by choosing to upgrade now, you can reap the rewards of newer technology immediately and avoid the lengthy waiting lists that begin to form as Openreach stop selling new ISDN services.

In this best practice plan we outline what you need to do now – and how your business can realise a competitive advantage.

We also explain the new benefits that digitisation brings and why you must take action sooner rather than later to avoid serious operational problems in the foreseeable future.

We're much closer to the Switch Off deadline than you may realise. **What do we need to do?**

The clock is already ticking and the Big Switch Off is well underway. This simple five-step plan will ensure you're properly prepared for the change and realise the opportunity to save time and money by future-proofing your communications.



Step 1: Audit your current communications usage.

What do you have in place right now? Take an audit to assess your current communications set-up so you fully understand what needs to be updated. Don't forget to check those easily forgotten details like fax machines, alarm systems, modems etc. Every single one of your ISDN connections will need to be replaced with an IP alternative.

Explore how your business requirements can be met by a more consolidated approach using next gen technology





Step 2: Find out when your legacy contracts end.

Check to see when your local communications exchange is due to be issued with a stop sell notice.

Do your contracts expire before or after that date? A service still in contract after that date will continue to work - but you won't be able to renew any agreements that expire.

It is also worth noting that if your contract expires after the stop sell, but before the 2025 switch off, you have no choice but to explore a next gen alternative as your current service will no longer be available.

Step 3: Define your future communications strategy

Meet with your stakeholders to determine current and future business requirements.

- » Will you increase use of flexi-working?
- » Are more of your team working remotely?
- » Do you have international expansion plans?

Answering these strategic questions will help you understand what your upgrade needs to achieve and help to future-proof your business communications.





Step 4: Assess potential of next gen technology

With your communications strategy defined you can investigate how newer technology can help you meet those goals.

Consolidating communications systems allows you to develop new, more efficient ways of working - and potentially help to reduce current and future operating costs too.

Step 5: Speak to a telecoms partner

We'd be happy to support you on this project, so get in touch today and we'll start mapping out your digital journey together.

Our real world experience will help you navigate the various upgrade options, selecting the best solutions for your strategic goals.

Remember, the sooner you start, the sooner you can reap the benefits of an all-new digital communications system.



What happens if you don't switch now?

Although the Big Switch Off will not complete until 2025, your business should still be planning to migrate to hosted voice solution at the earliest opportunity.

The fact that Openreach continues to issue 'stop sell' instructions at a growing number of local exchanges serves to underscore the importance of taking action now.

Major projects take time

If you have an existing phone system or on-premise switchboard (called a PBX), you will need to work with an experienced provider like Gamma or one of their trusted partners to properly assess what you have, what you need and how that will be deployed throughout your organisation.

Transitioning to hosted voice is usually painless but, given that your telephones are a business-critical communications channel, you will want to ensure every stage of the project is properly planned and managed in advance. Starting now ensures the project is not rushed.

Avoid cost increases

The closer we get to December 2025, the higher demand for migration services will be.

Expect to see vendor lead times increasing exponentially – along with prices. Starting early allows you to avoid supply constraints and waiting lists – and the cost increases that they bring.

Businesses who leave migration too late may find that waiting lists extend beyond the Big Switch off date, leaving them without phones - and customers.

The process may be more complicated than expected

When discussing the Big Switch Off, the focus is typically on telephone systems.

However, any PSTN-connected device will be affected by the digital transition – and these can be easily overlooked.

You will need to audit your assets to consider factors like CCTV, alarms, fax machines, EPOS terminals, dial-up connections and point-to-point leased lines. If it's connected to a phone line, it's at risk.

The earlier you begin your VoIP transition planning, the more time you have available to deal with the unexpected.

Why you should make the switch now

The switch to cloud communications offers significant opportunities for your business – and they are available now, before the digital transition completes.

Indeed, there's huge benefits in making the move before Openreach implements the next tranche of 'stop sell' orders.

Lower costs

Hosted voice is 100% software based. This allows your organisation to build an enterprise-class phone system without the overheads of sourcing, deploying and maintaining an on-premise switchboard.

No upfront costs, additional hardware or infrastructure required.

Increased flexibility

Hosted voice can route calls to virtually any device – handset, smartphone or PC. Importantly, calls can be made and received anywhere, so you can carry your work extension with you at all times. In the office, on the road or working from home, no one is desk-bound any more.



Increased productivity

Hosted voice platforms can include many more features and functions than a traditional landline.

Unified communications allow you to add video calling, conferencing, instant messaging and more to your comms toolkit, so employees have a range of new ways to stay in touch – and be more productive.

New ways of working

Adding new users and extensions to a hosted voice platform takes nothing more than a few clicks. You can build a virtual switchboard that connects colleagues wherever they are, allowing you to build teams of the very best talent regardless of location. And because you can add and remove extensions as your workforce scales, you never pay for capacity you're not using.

These benefits are available now, so there's no need to wait for the Big Switch Off to complete.



“The Big Switch Off could be seen as an inconvenience – but it is actually an opportunity to deploy new technologies that save money, unlock new ways of working and prepare your business for the realities of communication in the digitally transformed marketplace.”

Sara Sheikh

Head of Product Management, Gamma Telecom

Contact us today to discuss your communications strategy - and what you need to do now to avoid being derailed by the Big Switch Off.

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