



Requirements for starting your

VoIP Business

If you are interested to start your own VoIP business, there are few infrastructure requirements, apart from creating a sales/ marketing infrastructure. Here is a brief guide into the requirements to make a successful VoIP business:

1) Set up a VoIP infrastructure, comprising of hardware and software:

You will need to set up a cloud based infrastructure, which will allow the VoIP services to be delivered. This will comprise of software elements and hardware (servers), which will be hosted in Internet Data Centres. This infrastructure will support all calls, SMS, IM and other transactions that you will offer, based on your offering and business model. The key ingredients of this infrastructure are:

- **Softswitch with Billing** – This is the software component which is the heart of the VoIP business and controls all transactions, customer records, call routing and customer billing, in both pre-paid and post-paid business model. Softswitches come in various ratings, primarily based on the concurrent transactions it can handle; for example a softswitch which can handle 1000 concurrent calls or a softswitch which can handle only 400 concurrent calls. Apart from concurrent calls, there are parameters like stability, security, scalability, ease of operations, call connectivity efficiency, call routing mechanisms and other features, which will dictate the choice of softswitch. Generally the softswitches come with inbuilt billing but if it does not, then one needs to invest in separate billing software.
- **Bandwidth Optimization Software** – This software component is very necessary for retail operations, where the internet quality at customer end may not be consistent. This software, installed on the server side, ensures that customers have a smoother quality experience, even if the internet throughput in their 3G/ Wi-Fi connection is not always adequate to support VoIP calls.
- **Servers & Hosting** – The above software is generally installed on enterprise class servers, which are hosted in Internet Data Centres (IDC) and which can offer an always on service with quality bandwidth and power / air-conditioning 24/7, to ensure that your services never go down. One can lease server/bandwidth from IDC's around the world, the location of the IDC being dependent on your target market and/or quality of service of the IDC.

Software providers like REVE Systems offer you a fully managed service, where we offer the software in full hosted model, which comprises of hardware/ IDC services like bandwidth, power etc, with complete 24/7 support. Opting for this kind of service ensures that the VoIP service provider does not have to deal with multiple agencies and gets the services from a single window.

2) Client Applications (Mobile VoIP application, PC software application etc)

If you opt for the retail VoIP services, then you will need to provide the applications using which customers will originate calls. For a full blown retail services, service providers need to purchase the following software solutions.

- **Mobile VoIP Client** – this is a mobile app, which your customers will download on their mobile phones, in order to make calls. There are multiple mobile VoIP clients available in the industry but one should choose that client which offers branding facility to the service providers, so that your brand will be present and visible to the customers. Apart from this, the mobile application has to be stable, have good voice quality, be able to support bandwidth optimization requirements and have an easy user interface which allows clients to make calls even if they are not a technology geek.
- **PC Dialer (Software for making calls from PC's)** – one needs to offer customers this facility, as many retail customers make calls from their personal computers (PC's). This is also a software application, which needs to be downloaded by the customer before they can make any calls. The PC dialer choice will also depend on the brandable options and quality features which are similar to the Mobile VoIP application.
- **Calling Card Option** – one needs to offer calling card facility to retail customers, which is the only option for those customers who want to access VoIP services but do not have internet availability in their mobile phones or have a PC/ Device access at the time of making the calls. In order to offer this option to customers, you will need to ensure that your softswitch supports calling cards and has a DID (Direct Inward Dial) or local telephone number configured with it. Here the DID is a local telephone number that your customers will dial into – thereupon be greeted by an IVR voice system, which will ask them to enter their destination number and the call will be connected.
- **Call Shop Supporting feature** – if you are planning to offer retail services, the call shop feature is a must have for doing business in many countries, where customers go to call shops to make long distance calls. This feature allows call shops to manage multiple customer calling infrastructures, from PC/ Devices/ Mobile phones and is able to identify and bill the consumer accordingly and easily, while maintaining full control of their operations. REVE Systems' softswitch, iTel Switch Plus offers a very advanced call shop feature, which is used by many retail service providers around the world.
- **IP Devices Support** – again in retail VoIP operations, one will need to ensure that your services are compatible with standard IP devices like Linksys, Grand stream etc and that customers are able to use IP devices to access your services.

3) Your own website, with Credit Card payment gateway support

If you are in the VoIP business, you will get potential customers from around the world. In order to provide services to your customers from various geographies efficiently, you will need a fully functional website with payment options like Credit Cards, Paypal etc supported – so that customers can pay you seamlessly and use the services. So a fully functional and efficient website is a must requirement for every VoIP operator. The website is your store front and it needs to be continuously updated and always available to your customers.

4) Inter -Connecting with Terminating Carriers

In order to terminate the calls to your customers, both in retail and wholesale business, you will need to interconnect with multiple carriers around the world, who will offer you various termination destinations. It pays to connect with more carriers, so that you have enough choice of rates and destinations, both in terms of cost and quality. For example, if you are terminating calls to USA, different carriers will offer different rates and quality of services – so you will need to choose these carriers based on their market reputation and quality achieved during your interconnect tests. These carriers offer destination rates in USD/ min terms, for example, rate to USA could be 0.008 – which means for every 1 min of a single call terminated through their network, they will charge you 0.008 USD. The termination cost is the single largest variable cost for VoIP operators and hence you will need to be diligent in choosing carriers and maintaining your accounts with them.

5) Finally, find some customers

Like in other businesses, here also you will need to find customers after you have done the home work of establishing the infrastructure and other basic requirements. So whether you are in the retail or wholesale VOIP services, you will need to find customers and offer those competitive rates and good quality of services. In terms of maintaining quality of services, two important parameters will be your infrastructure quality and quality of terminating carriers – so please make sure that you choose the right ones.

6) Customer Support

After you have started getting customers and having customer transactions/ Calls, you will need to provide the customer support in place, so that you can address your customer problems. If you are servicing a global customer base, you will also need to ensure that you are offering full 24/7 support, so that your customers are able to reach you whenever they have any service disruption and your team is able to support them. At REVE Systems, we offer 24/7 support to all of our customers, through our network of support engineers. It is a fully functional support portal with trouble ticket opening and live chat facilities.