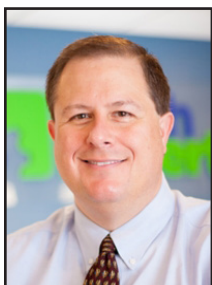# TechTidbit.com
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VoIP Is The Ultimate Solution For Small Biz Phone Woes

Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

One major technology pain point small businesses have revolves around communications. If your clients and prospects can't effectively reach your staff, customer support and productivity is weakened. Increasingly, small businesses need more out of their phone system, and VoIP solutions offer more features with less expenses.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is, essentially, phone calls in the cloud. Voice signals are converted to packets that are sent across the Internet and reassembled in the correct order when they reach their destination. VoIP services can be deployed over the Internet or private IP networks (LAN/WLAN).

Why should your business invest in a powerful VoIP solution? There are several reasons, but the most important one is that it's a huge opportunity to save on your business's operating expenses. VoIP services can save a small business hundreds of dollars per month on their phone service costs.

Here are three reasons why VoIP is a significant contender for your business's primary communications solution.

Cost Savings

As already mentioned, VoIP has the ability to reduce communication costs every month in operational expenses.

Legacy telephone companies are known for bundling together services that your business might not necessarily utilize, meaning that you're wasting money paying for services that aren't needed.

A VoIP solution allows you to select from a variety of services, and you only pay for the ones that you use.

Simple to Set Up

Because VoIP uses your Internet to transmit your voice, there are no extra wires that need to be added to your business's infrastructure. There's no overhaul of your entire cabling infrastructure to add new lines.

Of course, this simplicity comes with a downside; your Internet connection must be stable and your bandwidth needs to be able to handle the increased traffic.

Versatility

If you're new to VoIP, you'll be glad to hear that it's super easy to use on several different types of devices. You can access your VoIP account through your browser, even if you're on the move. All you need is an IP-enabled phone. This helps you stay productive even when you're not in the office.

Tech Experts has all of the tools and skills to equip your business with powerful VoIP solutions that let you stay connected with both your customers and employees. We're an authorized partner for the Windows server-based 3cx VoIP phone system. 3cx can support hundreds of simultaneous calls. It is what we use for our own phone system.

Depending on your business's unique needs, you might need more than simple IP voice services. We can equip your business with video chat, instant messaging, and much more. Just give us a call at (734) 457-5000 to learn more.

> "VoIP services can save a small business hundreds of dollars per month on their phone service costs."

Should You Leave Your PC On Or Power It Down?

"Only you can know if it's best to turn off your PC at the end of the day or keep it on."

Michael Menor is Vice President of Support Services for Tech Experts.

At the end of the workday, you've got an important decision to make: power down your desktop or log off? Each option has its own set of pros and cons, but are you confident that you're making the right decision? Here's how to find out for sure.
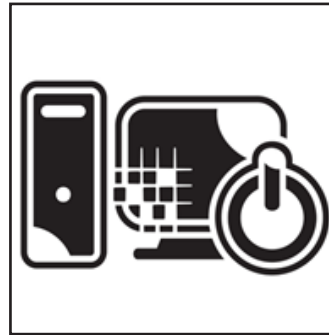
First off, the answer to this question is dependent upon **how frequently the machine is used.** For the sake of this article, let's address the computing needs of the average office worker who uses their PC for the Monday through Friday, 9-to-5 grind.

Secondly, we feel the need to address a common perception about turning a computer on and off: **it does NOT cause physical harm to the equipment.**

This was the case in the early days of the PC, back when the power surge from powering it on was actually bad for the components, but this issue has been resolved since 1993.

Another factor to consider is **power consumption.** If you're the kind of person that likes to make sure every light is turned off before going home and you pride yourself in finding ways to lower your electricity bill, then you may want to power down your machine for the night.

Although, if you're looking to leave it on in order to get a jump start on your workday, then put your PC in sleep mode (a.k.a Standby or Hibernate) before leaving the office, instead of turning it off.

Sleep mode is designed to use as little energy as possible, which equates to less than what's used by a traditional light bulb.

Your **geographical location** should also factor into this decision.

For example, if you live in a place that's prone to natural disasters and the power grid sporadically has blackouts, then you're going to want to power off your machine at the end of the workday.

Unless your IT infrastructure is equipped to handle power inconsistencies with tools like an Uninterrupted Power Supply, a powered-on computer can be damaged by a sudden loss of power.
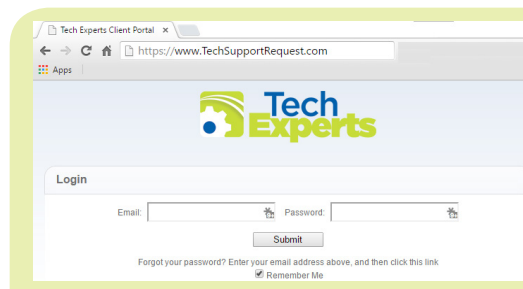
Also, as explained by Computer Hope, while turning off a PC can protect from a sudden loss of power, turning it off does nothing to prevent damage from a power surge: "A power surge destroys electrical devices regardless if it is on or off. Therefore, turning the computer off does not prevent this from occurring. The only way to prevent power surges is to unplug all power cables, phone cables, and network cables."

Another factor that you'll want to consider is **your computer's maintenance schedule.** For example, it's best practice to run a daily virus scan at night so that the scan doesn't interfere with your work during the day.

Also, if you're taking advantage of managed IT services like the services that Tech Experts provides, then you'll want to leave your desktop powered on so that we can remote into it (or all of them) and run scans, perform routine maintenance, apply patches and updates, and more.

If the machine is powered down, then we won't be able to access it and do our job.

After considering all of these different factors, only you can know if it's best to turn off your PC at the end of the day or keep it on.

Create new service requests, check ticket status, and review invoices in our client portal:
http://www.TechSupportRequest.com

Time To "Bite the Bullet" And Upgrade Your Software

From the largest of the large companies to the everyday home user, there comes time when you have to upgrade your software, either by force or necessity.

No one wants to spend money to upgrade their software when they feel it still works and functions for their needs, but truthfully, that old reliable software needs to go.

The most important thing to remember is that software companies don't end support of their software out of malice. It's simply a business decision.

For a company to continue to release updates and patch security exploits, it would require countless man hours from software engineers, support staff and help desk personnel.

At the same time, they would be continuing to support software that is outdated in functionality and design. No company can survive in today's fast-paced world by sitting idle.

By not upgrading your software, you are – by your own means – opening yourself and your company up to cyber-attacks from hackers taking advantage of the security exploits that are no longer being patched. This is the single most important reason to upgrade your outdated, End of Life (EOL) software.

While software companies do release new versions of their software and EOL old versions of their own accord, there are times when they too are forced to make changes due to upgrades in an Operating System (OS).

Consider Windows 98, which was the typical OS for several years and boosted a huge selection of software titles ranging from games to business productivity applications.

But when the following Windows releases came along (like XP, 7, 8, and 10) and grew in popularity, any software company that wanted to continue to stay unburied had come up with new versions of their software that would be compatible with each of the new OS platforms.

This, in turn, would force people to upgrade if they wanted to continue to use their software.

Businesses that use programs like Microsoft Office could feel like they are forced into upgrades. This is understandable, but at the same time, you have to make sure your business stays productive and secure.

With hackers waiting for the opportunity to gain access to your business, it's imperative to make sure you do everything you can to block the attacks. And, yes, this includes upgrading your operating system and software.

There is light at the end of tunnel, however. Companies like Microsoft and Adobe have redesigned the way they sell their software.

No longer will you be locked into one version, whether you purchase the software by the retail copy or by volume license.

They offer plans that allow you subscribe to use the software and during your subscription period you are entitled to receive free version upgrades if there any. They have released subscription plans for large companies, students, and everyday home users.

Remember: it's better to "bite the bullet" than be struck by the bullet. For assistance with software upgrades or ask questions about the security of your business and software, contact us at (734) 457-5000, or email us at info@ mytechexperts.com.

> *"Software companies don't end support of their software out of malice. It's simply a business decision."*

How To Create A Windows 10 Recovery Drive

Since most Windows 10 users obtained their version of the latest Microsoft operating system as an upgrade from a previous version, there isn't a built-in recovery system if your PC or other device is disabled.

You would have to revert to that previous operating system and re-download Windows 10. Unfortunately, if that occurs past Windows 10's first year on the market, that download won't be free.

To potentially save some money down the line and a significant hassle, it is a good idea to create your own Windows 10 recovery drive to re-install the operating system in the case of a system disaster.

A simple way to do this if you upgraded via the media creation tool is to use that same tool to create a recovery drive on removable media, such as a disc or USB flash drive.

To do this, run the tool, click whether you have a 64-bit or 32-bit system, and choose 'Create installation media for another PC' from the available options. This directs you to a screen asking what language you prefer and which version of Windows 10 you currently use. Make the appropriate selections, and you will be walked step-by-step through the rest of the process.

Another method to create a Windows 10 recovery drive is to use the Recovery Options within the Control Panel.

With previous versions of Windows, this feature was a tad easier to locate, but it still lurks in the background for you to find. From the Start menu, you can open Set-tings and then type Recovery in the top right dialogue box to reveal an option to 'Create a Recovery Drive' before following the steps to complete the action. Alternatively, you can just type Recovery Drive into Cortana's search field on the bottom left of your screen.

With either method, choose to back up your system files, and you will be directed to insert your media after a short wait for a systems check.

You will need at least 4GB of space on your disc or USB drive, and bear in mind that any other information already on it will be erased with the addition of the Windows 10 recovery drive.

This process will take a while, but you are able to continue working as your device copies everything onto your removable media.

Older Internet Explorer No Longer Supported

Microsoft recently made the announcement that it will no longer offer support for Internet Explorer versions prior to Explorer 11.

It is also only through Explorer 11 that users can receive updates for the following operating systems: Windows 7, Windows 8.1, and Windows 10. While this does not prevent users from continuing to turn to Internet Explorer for their browsing needs, it does serve as a call to action for optimum usability and security while surfing the web.

Without up-to-date security patches, devices are at risk of malware and other forms of malicious attacks.

In addition to such security risks, users who continue to use unsupported versions of Explorer may lose Independent Software Vendor (ISV) support or encounter compliance issues.

The company also outlined how Explorer users can update to the latest version, at no extra charge. People who use Internet Explorer (IE) can be roughly divided into three categories: Enterprise users, small to medium businesses, and home PC users. Each groups has a slightly different means to upgrade to Explorer 11; however, their experience should be hassle free.

Albeit, some small-to-medium business owners have expressed concerns about their line-of-business (LOB) application having a dependency on a particular Explorer version. Microsoft has addressed this concern by integrating an Enterprise Mode into Explorer 11 that allows backward compatibility with web applications specifically designed for previous versions of Explorer.

Smaller businesses, whose software does not depend on previous IE versions, can upgrade through Automatic Updates or contact a Certified Microsoft Partner like Tech Experts for assistance.

Home PC users could see an automatic upgrade to Explorer 11 via Automatic Updates.

Still, if the home PC upgrades are set to 'off', updates to Explorer 11 will have to be done manually through the Control Panel and the Check for Updates button under the Windows Update tab.