The ultimate guide to future-proofing your voice communications

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Nobody can predict the future — and it's coming whether you're ready for it or not. So, what side do you want to be on with your voice communications?

The 2020 pandemic is a great example of how unpredictable external events can impact companies worldwide — even catch them off guard. Just how bad was it? Well, 72% of IT decision-makers said their tech stack wasn't prepared for the sudden switch to remote work. On the other hand, those who were prepared gained an immediate competitive advantage and thrived.

While we can't predict the future, we can look at current developments in voice communications to consider their potential impact on companies around the world.

It's no secret: future-proofing your voice communications today will prepare your entire company to handle the voice communications of tomorrow. After all, you don't want to miss a beat if unforeseen events scatter your workforce again.

You already know we love text and email. But we want you to know voice communications aren't going anywhere. In fact, research shows most consumers and businesses still prefer voice communications over email.

And your customers love them, too. The top communication channel for customers still is the tried-and-true phone call. In fact, it's preferred by 62% of consumers, while email is the second most popular option, coming in at 46%.

So, how should you future-proof your voice systems to guarantee your employees and customers will always have this highly regarded option at their fingertips?
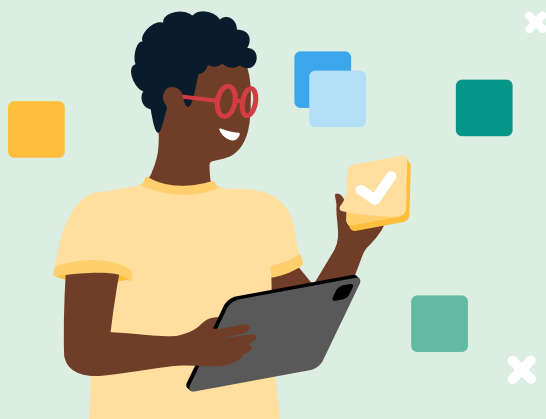
Think about these five key topics:

- ✓ Why future-proofing your voice systems is important

- ✓ Characteristics of a hybrid VoIP phone system ready for the future

- ✓ What might be at stake if you 'wait and see'

- ✓ Essential questions to help develop your future-proofing strategy

- ✓ The blueprint for switching to a future-ready system

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Why voice communications matter today — and why it will still matter tomorrow

Customers, partners, and employees love voice communication. After all, it's a familiar way to communicate.

Think about it like this:

- Phone support remains popular even today, with 36% of people over 56 ranking it as their preferred channel, while people aged 40–55 rank it second and younger demographics third. While customers do enjoy email for specific types of communications — when it comes to more complex or time sensitive problems — the ability to connect with an agent can lead to quicker resolutions. Phone support is also ideal when a customer wants to ensure the discussion is clearly understood by both parties. That's why having the right cloud business phone system is still essential even in the age of email and live chat.

- Employees appreciate having flexible communications, whether it's chat, voice, or other solutions. It's important to understand the familiarity and emotional connection voice provides.

- Vendors and partners appreciate the human element of talking to someone at your company or receiving a call from a friendly salesperson. It's why they're called sales calls, not sales live chats.

It's clear having a hybrid VoIP system matters today, but what about tomorrow? It's unlikely the current value of voice comms will disappear. If anything, it may become more valuable. For example, emerging technologies are hard at work leveraging AI to analyze voice data to gain deep insights.

Today's contact centers analyze less than 3% of recorded calls. This means call data from 97% of customer conversations only exists between the people on the call.

We know data can become insights to drive informed and strategic business decisions, so why is there such a disconnect? Unfortunately, most contact centers lack the tools to process and analyze audio at scale.

But that's changing. New tools are becoming available for analyzing voice data to determine emotion and caller intent — alongside insights covering the content of each call. Soon, future-ready businesses across all industries will have a wealth of information into every call they make or receive.

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Future voice boosting advancements may include:

- Adoption of single API formats to provide enhanced versatility and flexibility to voice systems

- Automated natural language processing to reduce or eliminate manual tasks like transcription, freeing employees up to focus on higher-impact tasks

- Voice recognition systems which improve security by allowing for reliable voice authentication to access sensitive data or systems, including authenticating your customers

Voice systems will remain critical to your business and preparing for the future now will allow you to adopt new value-enhancing capabilities.

What does a future-proofed voice system look like?

Future-proofing your voice communications may seem hard. In reality, we already have an idea of what the future holds. Let's start by discussing some key characteristics of what a future-proofed voice system looks like.

Cost-effective redundancy

Redundancy is essential, but it can become extremely expensive if done wrong. A future-proofed voice system has a cost-effective, geo-redundant infrastructure. If your primary services go down, the system automatically switches to backups to keep your voice communications active.

Tech stack integration

Your voice systems shouldn't be siloed — they should integrate seamlessly with your tech stack. For example, customer and partner data should feed into your CRM, while co-workers should be reachable with the click of a button.

A future-proofed voice system integrates with your current tech stack and is ready for whatever new apps you may use in the future. Simplifying the flow of data between your systems not only reduces frustration, it improves productivity and adds value to everything in your tech stack.
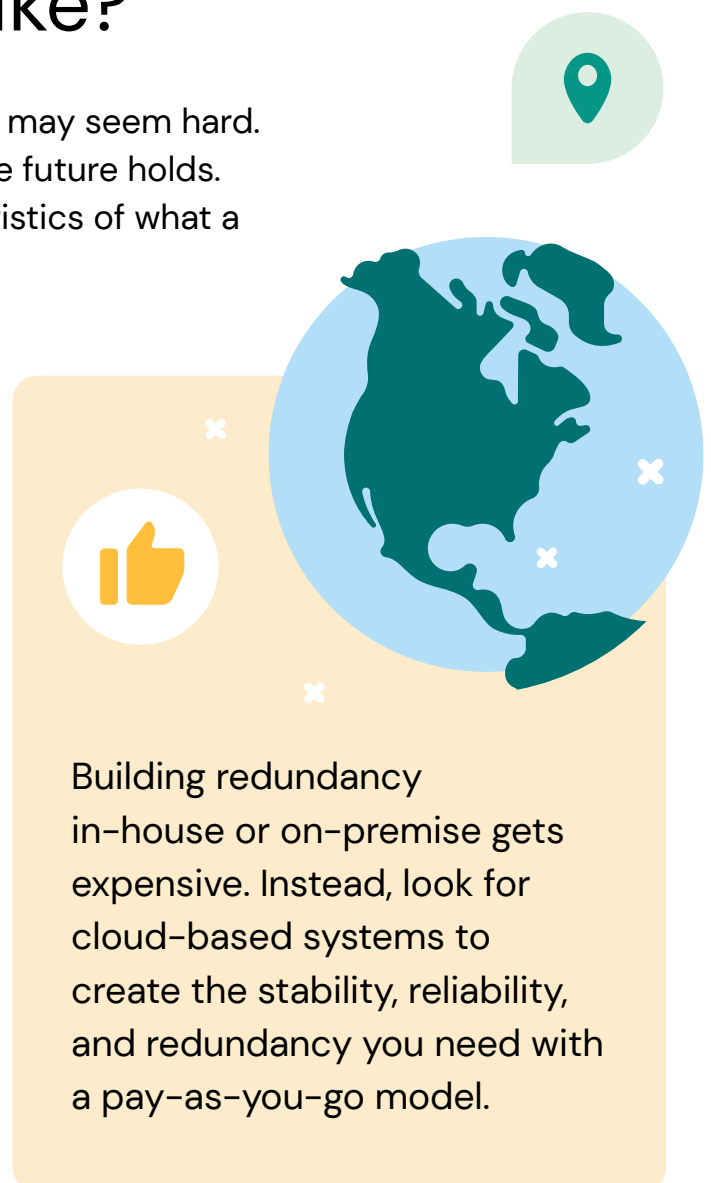
Building redundancy in-house or on-premise gets expensive. Instead, look for cloud-based systems to create the stability, reliability, and redundancy you need with a pay-as-you-go model.

Fully compliant

Preparing your cloud business phone system for the future isn't all about exciting new technologies. It's also about being fully compliant with evolving regulatory requirements, including:

- **RAY BAUM'S Act (Section 506):** Multi-line telephone systems are [mandated under RAY BAUM'S Act](#) to send dispatchable information for all 911 calls — including the caller's exact floor and office number, so first responders know exactly where to go.

- **Kari's Law:** Under Kari's Law, all multi-line telephone systems must be able to reach 911 directly, without the previously required '9' to reach an outside line. This law is designed to make accessing vital services easier and less error prone.

- **STIR/SHAKEN:** Maliciously spoofed numbers and robocalls have become a significant problem. STIR/SHAKEN is a series of protocols designed to digitally validate calls before handing them off to combat malicious callers. The protocols have been legally mandated by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and were designed to expand outside of these regions in the future.

- **Enhanced 911 (E911):** It's vital for all future-ready voice systems to properly route 911 calls to the local public safety answering points (PSAP) and provide dispatchable information. Otherwise, 911 calls will be routed to the national center and incur a fee. Therefore, the [FCC mandates E911](#) capabilities.

Legacy voice systems will struggle to meet these requirements, while many agile cloud-based systems are already compliant. Future-proofing your voice system makes compliance easy. It also allows you to keep up with new changes.

API-friendly

Similar to tech stack integration, your voice communications should be API-friendly to enable the flow of data between critical apps and systems.

An API-friendly system will automatically send data to your CRM, PowerBI, Microsoft ecosystem, and other vital tools your business relies on.

Additionally, you can use APIs to create unique relationships between your critical systems to fit your business's different needs. For example, you can develop a single-pane dashboard, turning vital data into deep insights for ticketing systems or leveraging call data in marketing campaigns.

Internationally expandable

One of the biggest flaws of legacy phone systems is their reliance on national infrastructure. It's one of the main reasons international calls can still be costly. Using a legacy system means paying to use additional infrastructure.

A modern cloud business phone system is internationally expandable and scalable. This capability is key for businesses planning to expand or simply communicate with partners, vendors, and customers internationally.

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What's at stake if your business doesn't future-proof its voice solutions?

Future-proofing your voice communications requires time and resources. So, what's at stake if your company avoids futureproofing? The exact consequences will depend on your legacy system and how the future unfolds.

Likely scenarios to think about include:

- **Rising costs:** Maintaining and supporting legacy systems will continue to become more expensive and time intensive. The hardware you rely on will age, require maintenance and replacement, and start failing. Legacy redundant systems further increase the cost of operating in-house systems.

- **More downtime:** You'll continue to be susceptible to outages and downtime, likely becoming more frequent as your system ages. Outages occurring throughout the infrastructure you depend on will create unavoidable business-impacting downtime.

- **Difficulty competing:** Companies embracing the future rather than fighting it gain a competitive advantage. A future-ready system can rapidly adopt any new technology, while legacy systems fall further behind. Additionally, companies with a fully integrated tech stack will be more productive and effective than those reliant on outdated systems.

- **Less agility and flexibility:** Your needs will likely change as your business grows, shrinks, or expands. A future-ready system allows you to adapt to these changes using API integrations with new critical systems and a simple process for adding or removing users.

- **Risking non-compliance:** Failing to meet regulatory requirements can result in fines and even suspension of your services. Digital future-proofed systems take a compliance-first approach to ensure you're always satisfying legal requirements.

Ready to future-proof?
Make sure to ask these questions

Migrating from your current system to a hybrid VoIP phone system starts when you ask the right questions. But first, you must have a solid understanding of your current capabilities, future needs, and business assets.

Here are some questions to ask when planning for the future:

- **What is your work environment like?** Is your business spread out throughout multiple locations? If you have a multi–location set up, what networks presently exist between them? Also, consider your entire tech stack and how it both enables and integrates with the collaboration and communication tools you already use.

- **Is hybrid work part of your culture? If not, why not?** Hybrid work improves employee satisfaction and reduces your operating expenses, which is why so many companies have embraced it. Adopting hybrid work prepares your company for any future incidents and creates a more flexible workforce. If you haven't embraced a hybrid work model, you probably should consider it. Hybrid workers have distinct voice communications requirements, so these needs must be considered when building your new future–ready system.

- **What is your call flow? Do you operate a contact center?** Gain a complete understanding of your company's voice needs as you prepare to migrate to a future–ready system. Complex call flows and contact centers have specific requirements any new systems must accommodate. At the same time, don't be afraid to revisit and streamline your call flow.

- **Who will handle change management? Do you have the IT talent to support it?** Appointing a change manager or an entire team will help minimize downtime or eliminate it altogether as you migrate your systems. Plus, consider your current IT staff — do they have the skills necessary to migrate your systems, or will you need outside support?

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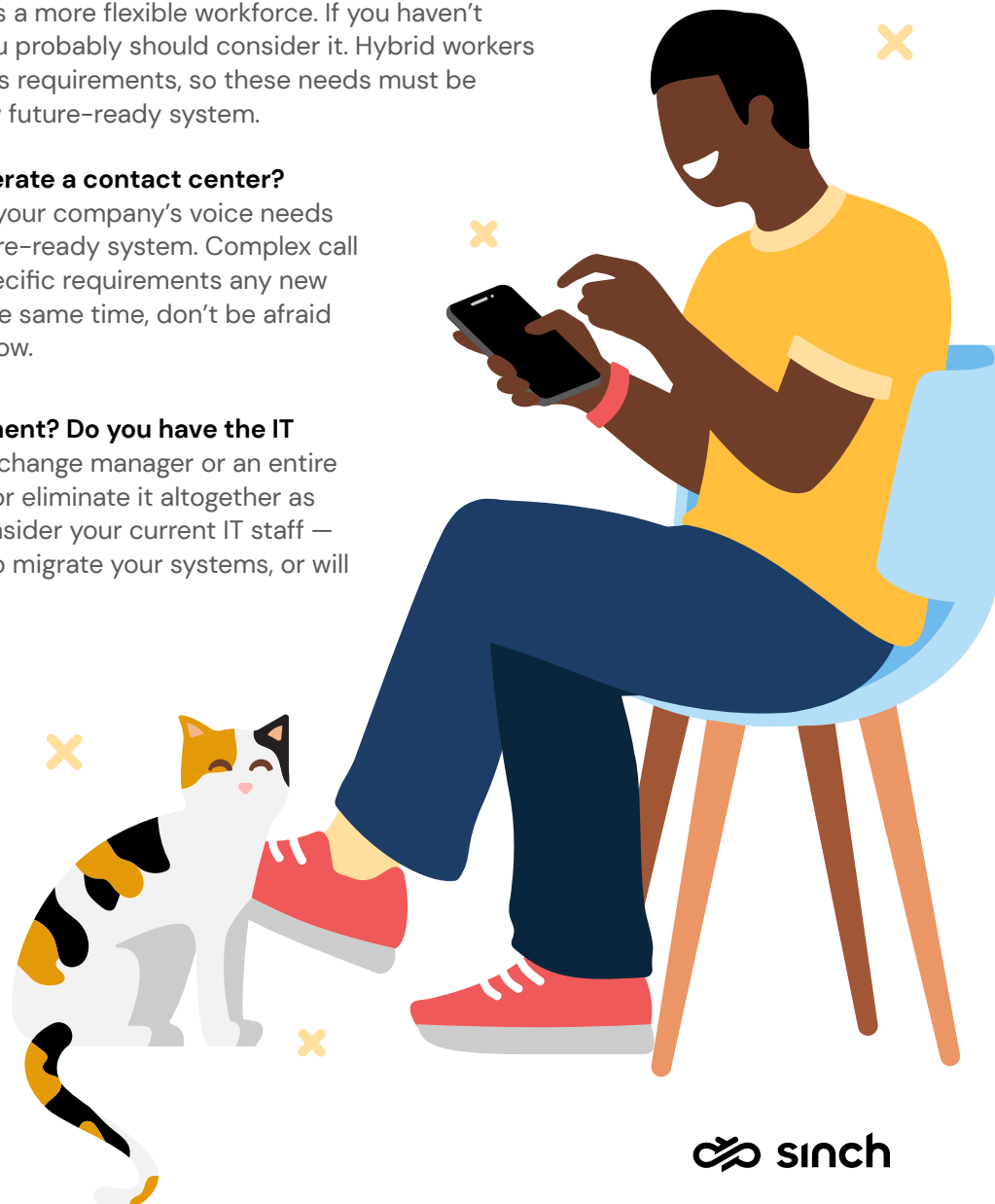
The blueprint to future-proofing your voice systems

It's time to step into the future. This blueprint will help you understand and start the entire process. Keep in mind some steps may change based on your needs and present system, but here's how you can take action:

1 **Embrace SIP trunking**

SIP trunking is a cloud-based service connecting your VoIP system and cloud infrastructure to the right Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). This vital service allows your new voice system to communicate with anyone, anywhere, with a pay-as-you-go pricing structure. Start here to pick other systems to integrate with your elastic SIP trunk service.

2 **Determine your collaboration platform**

How does your team communicate and collaborate? Microsoft Teams? Slack? Google Workspace? It's alright if you use multiple solutions but ensure your new voice system will integrate seamlessly with any collaborative tools you use.

3 **Deploy your cloud PBX**

Your cloud PBX is at the core of your new phone system and can provide the hardware and software necessary to make voice calls. With the preceding two pieces in place, you'll be able to pick the right cloud PBX provider, such as Microsoft Teams or another third-party service.

4 **Define work-from-home policies**

Now you know all the technical moving pieces, how should your employees use them and when? Create or revise work-from-home policies to reflect your improved capabilities and remember to keep communication, security, and ease of use in mind.

5 Ensure you are compliant and implement changes as needed

Ensure your new system meets the compliance requirements discussed earlier. Many telecom providers already will be, but don't take it for granted. Clarify if they're compliant and implement changes if necessary. Additionally, investigate other regulations potentially impacting your business based on operational jurisdictions and industry standards.

6 Consider additional services

Your new system can now go well beyond voice calls. Explore value-added services to expand your capabilities, such as cloud faxing, SMS services, and other digital office solutions.

7 Create a device management policy and map devices

With the completely new system designed, the final step is to create your new device management policy and map all known devices. Your new policies should define allowable usage, and consider Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiatives and every device touching the new system, including:

- Physical phones
- Smartphones
- Softphones
- Headsets
- Cameras
- Microphones
- IoT devices

Once deployed, you'll have a future-proofed voice system ready for an unpredictable future with the agility to meet nearly anything else coming your way.

Prepare for the future of business communications today

Planning ahead isn't just important for every business — it's essential. You never know what's hiding around the corner. So, just like you plan expenditures and expansions, you should prepare your communications for whatever the future holds.

You're now ready to step into the future, improve reliability, cut costs, and embrace emerging technologies. Great work!
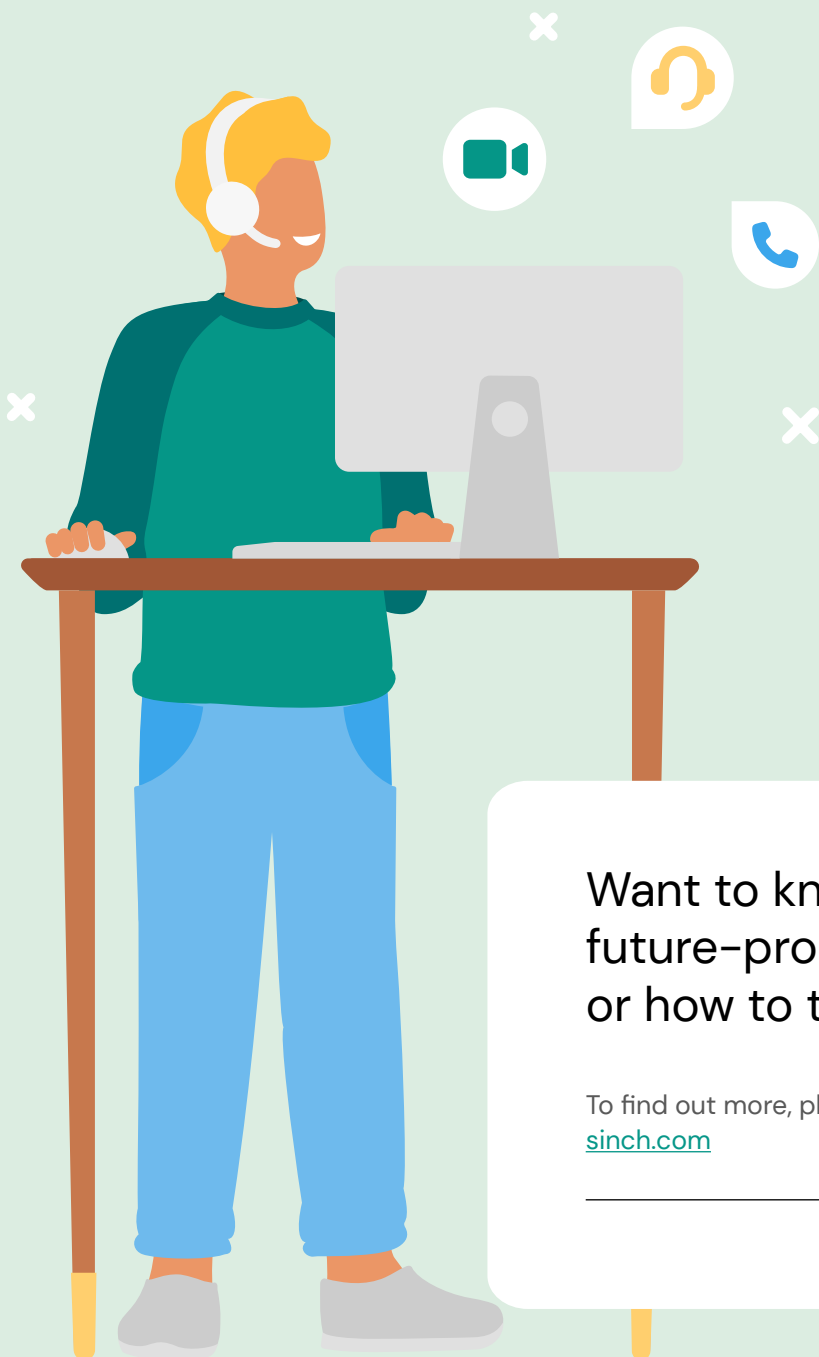
Want to know more about how to future-proof your voice systems or how to take the first steps?

To find out more, please visit:
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