



Implementation Guide

All signs point to VoIP so let's get started.



Before we start, we listen.

The keys to a successful transition to a VoIP-based network start with a clear understanding of the business case behind it and an implementation plan that best fits your company's overall objectives.

In order to help you develop the best phone system for your organization, we have to first understand what you need. We need to learn about how you want your new system to work for, and within, your business, to insure that the solutions meet or exceed your requirements. The enterprise operations that the service will support are a key factor in the overall design of the network. For example, if the network is supporting a call center, then voice quality will be a critical concern. However, if your network connects a number of remote offices or lightly used offices, then a focus on bandwidth and expense reduction may be more desirable.

Because of our complete portfolio of services and industry experience, we can help determine whether it would be a better strategy to replace your existing system altogether, or use existing components as a base to build a hybrid system which combine both VoIP and PSTN elements.

The key milestones of a typical conversion plan are:

- Gain understanding of the business and operational objectives of your organization
- Determine company expectations in order to define the best course of action
- Design, build, test, and implement your VoIP phone solution
- Educate the organization's users of the capabilities, methods, practices and tools available in the service

Things to think about.

Define the objectives of the converged network. What do you want this new technology to do for your company? Are there applications, such as video conferencing, that are currently being used in your organization which you would like to be supported within this service platform? Are there enterprise applications that you want to adopt that cannot be supported today within your current systems? What organizational demands and productivity needs may be driving this project, such as some or more of your employees moving to a remote office environment? Has your phone system reached the end of its life cycle or is scheduled for a costly upgrade, making now is the appropriate time to consider an overhaul of the entire networking infrastructure or impacting your ability to incorporate this equipment into your new network design? Other factors in play might include vendor or carrier contracts that are about to expire or renew and thus afford the opportunity for voice/data network consolidation.

Understand the current voice and data operating environments. Include existing loading factors on LAN and WAN segments, plus the anticipated bandwidth requirements for any new data applications. Consider current call patterns and anticipated growth during your busy hour periods.

Balance the issues of cost and QoS carefully. Many managers use cost to determine how much bandwidth to purchase, starting with the least possible amount and working up to an acceptable point of QoS. End users may not be very receptive to these experiments. Instead, start with a QoS objective on the test network, and see how much bandwidth is required to meet that objective.

Phones

When identifying all the phones to be replaced for your VoIP solution please take into account any phones that are not usually accessed. This would include any kitchen, guest, storeroom, and conference room phones, etc.

Internet Connections

Our VoIP solution utilizes Broadband connectivity such as a T-1 Internet connection. IP Phones utilize approximately 86 kilobytes worth of Internet bandwidth per simultaneous call. For example, a 1.5M upload/download T-1 connection would theoretically allow up to 18 simultaneous calls. We recommend that you build-in extra bandwidth for data traffic and overhead. On average, a company will have up to 25% of its employees on the phone at one time.

Telephone Numbers on IP

Legacy phone systems required an available phone line or channel for every simultaneous call. With Voice over IP, each call only requires adequate Bandwidth, not a separate number or channel. Therefore, with an "Auto Attendant" you could have 1 Direct Dial number for a site and only extensions assigned to users. All users would be able to make and receive calls. If you wish, you can request that each or some phones have a direct dial number associated with it.

Develop an Installation and Cutover schedule. Verify the critical paths in the schedule, such as equipment order and circuit installation, and reach agreements from all involved parties regarding the importance of this schedule.

Test the new system. It is important to verify that all dialing plan and network address changes have been successfully migrated to the new environment with this small group of stations before rolling out the implementation to hundreds or thousands of end users. Modify the Installation and Cut-over Schedule as necessary based on the results of this pilot installation.

Implementation

The purpose of this document is to provide you, the customer, with an understanding of the processes needed to ensure all VoIP orders are executed with clear communication and the utmost attention to the service delivery process. This document will also propose guidelines for trouble resolution and escalation procedures as well as departmental duties. This document is designed to ensure maximum customer service and to provide you with an understanding of the overall service delivery process.

Elara's VoIP Team

The Implementation is a three way partnership between the Customer, the Sales Representative and the Service Delivery

Customer

The customer or the customer's telecom representative (vendor) provides telecom service requirements to the Elara Sales Representative. The customer provides information on current telecom services. Once a contract is reviewed, approved, and signed, the customer and/or vendor will have the opportunity to participate in a pre-planning provisioning call with their assigned VoIP Provisioning Specialist. The purpose of this call is to review order specifications, verify service expectations, define special needs, and target anticipated delivery dates. The call provides an opportunity for the customer/vendor to ask questions and receive answers from the Service Delivery Team. Customer responsibilities include:

- Provide Contact information (e-mail, phone) for status updates
- Execute proper paperwork
- Understand interface demarcation point between Elara and customer provided equipment or network
- Determine preference for network assessment, if applicable
- Participation in planned provisioning conference call
- Identify training requirements if any

Sales

The Sales Team initiates the relationship with a customer. The sales team works to secure a service proposal and price quote. Sales are responsible for finalizing the contract with the customer. Sales responsibilities include:

- Initial point of contact for the customer
- Complete the pre-sales questionnaire
- Identify customer requirements and needs
- Construct original contractual agreements
- Create original pricing
- Accurately complete and submit required paperwork

VoIP Provisioning Specialist

Elara is committed to providing customers with unbeatable customer service. To achieve this, a customer will be assigned a dedicated VoIP Provisioning Specialist to ensure we continually meet and exceed their expectations. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist is tasked with ensuring that the customer's services are being delivered as mutually agreed upon. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will act as the customer's single point of contact for communications implementation process. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist responsibilities include:

- Verify VoIP paperwork
- Customer's single point of contact for coordination, managing and escalation of orders in the implementation process, and general service inquiries
- Facilitate or assist with end-user training

Major Accounts Representative (MAR)

Our biggest customers benefit from senior-level customer care agents who can help them coordinate their large volume of lines and services. Your Major Account Representative is ready to serve as your primary point of contact for all account maintenance, billing, service, and general support requirements. Your assigned representative will interact with all departments at Access Point to provide the most comprehensive, professional customer service possible. If for any reason your assigned representative is not available, the Major Account Team is there to serve as back up.

The Major Account Representative that is assigned to your account will provide tracking data both during conversion and after, assist with any provisioning clarifications that occur, and provide account support for ongoing maintenance and service affecting concerns.

Trouble Reporting Procedures

During normal business hours the VoIP Provisioning Specialist is available to assist with service affecting issues, if any, during the implementation process.

The Customer Service Department at Elara is available to assist customers and is available 24/7. The initial trouble call from the customer will be handled by the Customer Service department at 800.436.7274. The Customer Service Rep will open a trouble ticket and determine the nature of the issue. If Customer Service cannot resolve the trouble, the ticket will be relayed to the Resolutions department. Resolutions will provide Tier 1 & 2 support. If the outage cannot be restored, Resolutions will open a trouble ticket with the appropriate carrier.

Carefully review all emails and documents sent to you to ensure they reflect the services you requested and the terms and conditions to which you agreed. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or email us—our contact information will be shown in every email.

VoIP Order Process:



New Order Process:

1. Pre-Order Planning Call: After credit approval, an Order Assurance Representative will schedule a call to verify paperwork, equipment and/or training needs and service configuration. Objectives of this call are to educate customers about VoIP services, define expectations for service delivery, review the customer's expectations and explain the implementation process.

2. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will coordinate the facilitation of the site survey if requested and oversee the equipment order for service. If Network Assessment is applicable, the VoIP Provisioning Specialist will coordinate the facilitation with the Network Operations Center (NOC).
3. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will send out an email notification that details the status of all in progress orders. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will be responsible for notifying the customer of status throughout the implementation process, and will be the single point of contact for the customer.
4. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will coordinate the ordering of circuit transport and the scheduling of service activation of loop.
5. Once a Firm Order Confirmation (FOC) is received for the loop, the VoIP Provisioning Specialist will send Local Number Portability (LNP) orders, if applicable, to the customer's current service provider to begin the number port process. At this time, IP addresses and DNS information are obtained for processing. FOC milestone information and anticipated circuit delivery dates are communicated to customer.
6. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will send the customer documentation regarding CPE, VoIP services, features, and user administration.
7. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will arrange for equipment orders to be sent to the appropriate parties for configuration and delivery options in order to meet anticipated installation dates. Elara provides new equipment to customers who purchase equipment. New equipment from our existing inventory or gently used devices can be provided for maintenance replacements, rental or Elara owned equipment.
8. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will notify the NOC, the customer, and the customer's vendor of the anticipated loop delivery and test date.
9. The NOC will use test telephone numbers, if applicable, to establish continuity and test through provided equipment. If we do not provide equipment, the NOC will test to the demarcation point of hand-off to the customer provided equipment or circuitry. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will coordinate the test and turn up of the loop with our carrier partner.
10. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will arrange an activation date with the customer and/or customer's vendor. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will coordinate the number port with the current service provider if applicable. Once a firm order confirmation is received for the number port due date, the VoIP Provisioning Specialist will inform customer or customer's vendor. At this time the VoIP Provisioning Specialist will provide the customer with their profile, user IDs and passwords for login.
11. VoIP service and telephone numbers will be activated on the pre-arranged confirmed cutover date. If the customer is requesting new numbers they will also be activated on this date. The VoIP Provisioning Specialist will complete required testing (i.e. 411, 911 internal dial plans, hunt). For hosted solutions, an Elara technician or vendor partner may be on site during the conversion process. Once the customer/vendor verifies service is good, the VoIP Provisioning Specialist will update order system which automatically starts the billing cycle. Invoices are generated per the bill cycle date.
12. If there are questions or additional training is required on Elara provided phones the VoIP Provisioning Specialist will facilitate this training.
13. After service is activated you will receive a completion notice. The completion notice will contain a link to a Customer Survey. We appreciate your time in completing the survey.

Elara anticipates that your implementation process will be smooth and efficient. We will guide you through the entire process and make it as simple as possible.

FAQs

How does Elara Work?

Elara is based on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), a method by which voice is digitized and transmitted in digital packets rather than using traditional circuit-committed protocols of the public switched telephone network (PSTN). The IP concept is similar to the PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network), except that instead of telephones it uses computers, and instead of telephone numbers every telephone has a unique IP Address. Thus, IP telephones use IP addresses.

Can my business benefit from Elara?

Businesses with telecommuters and small, remote offices function in the same communications environment as headquarters. Financial services, legal services, travel agencies, real estate offices, government, and higher-education organizations can benefit from using Elara.

What services are associated with Elara?

Elara provides a complete spectrum of local, long-distance and Dedicated Internet Access functionality.

What are the benefits of using Elara?

Elara provides the following key value elements:

Create a corporate network

- ✓ Remove physical limitations
- ✓ Connect remote employees seamlessly without extra costs
- ✓ Migrate easily
- ✓ Inter-office dialing

Simplify User Experience

- ✓ Shared company directory
- ✓ Prioritized call handling
- ✓ A unified voice mailbox
- ✓ Instant tie-in to remote workers and branches
- ✓ A Personal Web Portal for all feature management and personal preferences

Save on operating and capital expenditures

- ✓ Free "on-net" calling - Eliminates long distance between offices
- ✓ Built-in disaster recovery
- ✓ Minimized service calls

- ✓ Minimized system upgrade costs
- ✓ Minimized upgrade costs for new features
- ✓ No full-time employee needed to manage phone system
- ✓ Customizable
- ✓ Scale quickly up or down to meet staffing changes
- ✓ Adjust easily to each user through a browser-based console
- ✓ Deliver predictable monthly costs
- ✓ Adapt rapidly to integrate newly acquired personnel
- ✓ Work from office, home, mobile, or customer site while still on the system

Why would I subscribe to this?

This service allows small and medium businesses and multi-site enterprises to gain control over communications expenses and management difficulties associated with PBXs and IP/PBXs by migrating to a new network-based solution. Elara has all the features and functions of a very robust PBX system, yet it has better user interfaces and features than most PBXs on the market today. This promotes capital expenditure savings and on-going cost savings due to on-net calling between offices and bundled applications that businesses usually purchase separately.

What does Elara actually do?

Elara offers a new fully hosted VoIP service that replaces the need for a premises-based phone system and the multiple vendors required to provide popular applications. The features and applications are not only delivered to a customer's phone via a single dedicated Internet access pipe to the business, but the service can be individually customized by you.

What about redundancy and fail-over capabilities?

The service is engineered to be as reliable as any other carrier-grade network product. Since all of the data is stored in the network, the data itself is intact. The system has been tested to have "five 9s" reliability (99.999% availability), including (and especially) customer data.

What happens to the voice quality when several users are using their phones, and several other users try to do large data transfers?

When you evaluate the service with us, we will determine what the correct bandwidth will be required for the number of employees, as well as an evaluation of your LAN. So the system will be provisioned and installed to ensure voice quality, and the number of users and/or data being transmitted won't have an effect on voice quality.

What phones are supported? Is any additional equipment necessary to attach those phones to the service?

The service will work with any analog phone (no LCD support possible) and Polycom IP phones. All phones sold by Access Point, Inc. are certified on our VoIP Network. If using IP Phones not provided by Access Point, Inc. they will need to be pre-certified prior to service activation. To avoid any service interruptions, it is highly recommended that only one Manufacturer's IP Phone be used per location.

What about security? Could someone "hack into" my network?

The hosted communications servers are fully secured in the network, thereby ensuring that only authorized end users and network servers can access the system.

What if I have a firewall? How would it work?

You have multiple approaches for delivering IP telephony while keeping the firewall intact. The solution operates outside of the firewall and can utilize a Network Address Translation device (NAT) that only allows voice calls to the specific IP addresses through the firewall.

In case of failure of any component, is there any impact on service?

In the event of a failure, the impact on service is very limited, if at all perceptible. In fact, the system was designed to isolate failures, so any calls that are in progress will remain "up" in the event of a failure. Extensive network monitoring ensures that any local failures (for example, phones or LANs) are minimized when they do occur.

What about 800 Service?

You will be able to keep or convert this as you have it today.