



### Our opinion on: Softphones VS Desk Phones

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**This document is designed to highlight the opportunities that deploying softphones open up as well as outlining the drawbacks that a wholesale desk phone replacement scheme presents**

Let us appreciate that a soft phone will never have the same audio quality as a desk phone. The desk phone is the culmination of over 140 years of development and is designed to do one task, be a telephone.

Whilst the modern business telephone in most instances does more than just provide an audio connection it provides features such as DND, ACD, Call logs and forwarding etc. The modern business phone hardware is designed and optimised for the creation of an audio path between parties; the same is also the case for an IP based desk phone, albeit the functionality is delivered across an IP based network.

Soft phones by design run on PC's which are not inherently designed as telephones but provide a multifunctional platform for software to run on, smart phones are designed to run software but primarily are cellular phones.

There are many technical factors to take into consideration when thinking about deploying soft phones over desk phones:

- Soft phone audio quality will not match that of a desk phone
- How often does your PC crash! No PC, No Phone calls
- If you need to restart your PC you will be restarting your 'phone also
- You will need a headset for PC based soft phone deployment, but the right headset choice for your staff and business environment must be taken with great care. A quality headset can be costly and it should be regarded as a consumable item (they get broken, damaged lost etc. and like a toothbrush – everyone expects exclusive use of their headset – if you have a new staff member – they need a new headset!)
- Your PC/smart phone may meet the specification of the soft phone software. However, what other applications are consuming resources on the device at the same time as a phone call! This is one of the main reasons soft phones fail in many environments. *(Thought: When your browser is slow it's annoying; when the same happens to a softphone, calls are cut off!)*
- It is a more technical challenge to prioritise soft phone audio traffic on a network than would be the case for an IP Desk phone( of course not needed for Digital handsets)

- You are straddling the line between which part of the deployment is 'telephony' and which part is 'IT' the IT guy says the softphones are C\*\*p and you say they have not set up the network properly and the MDs level of frustration are hitting the roof.

### **Where Softphones are ideal....**

The softphone is a game changer for ad-hoc or remote users whether working from home or temporarily out of the office. Soft phones for transient staff that work both in and out of the office can provide much needed access to the office telephony features, presence and directories. Without a doubt, being able to act as a normal telephony user when externally located and connected to a Wi-Fi environment delivers benefits and breaks exciting new ground for customers. Link this with the advanced features of phone manager and the ability to paint positive pictures for the customer is endless...using the softphone on your mobile or laptop you can be sitting in Starbucks and call Julia with a single click on your phone or mouse.

Or 'as a doctor, when you are doing a home visit and you need to contact the practice nurse – it is one button to click ....

In the office or call centre, environment the business case and technical implications are more challenging; it is not simply a comparison of a soft phone license against a desk phone. As outlined above the additional cost and complexity are significant and need to be carefully considered.

Remember that in a telephony centric customer service business, an interrupted or off air CRM application or network, outage is inconvenient and disruptive – the inability to receive incoming phone calls means your customers and prospects are calling your competition!

### **Can you really afford to take that risk?**

So which is best? Both – depending on the environment, job function and location.

The softphone is transformational for mobile and remotely connected staff members and enables levels of connectivity and integration that would not be possible without it – however, in a telephony centric organisation with deskbound staff, the desk phone wins out.

There will be customers who are determined to move to the softphone / clean desktop environment - fine but make sure that they have considered the points we have raised.

