



HOSTED VOIP
& BUSINESS
CONTINUITY

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Nationwide
800.556.5829

Seattle Office
206.384.4755

Bay Area Office
408.512.2080

Partner Program
888.886.6116

1201 Western Ave
Seattle, WA 98101

www.speakeasy.net

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OVERVIEW

Business continuity is the ability of a business to continue essential functions during and after an unexpected interruption to normal business operations.

Businesses are not immune to the impact of natural disasters such as floods, fires, and hurricanes. Continuity can also be interrupted by more commonplace disasters, such as equipment failures, blackouts, and computer viruses. According to the non-profit Institute for Business & Home Safety, at least one-fourth of all businesses that close because of a disaster never reopen. Small businesses are especially vulnerable because few have the resources or knowledge to prepare a comprehensive disaster recovery plan.

Most businesses will eventually have to contend with some kind of sudden disruption, large or small. Yet a 2006 survey by Harris Interactive for MasterCard International found that 77% of business owners admit to being unprepared for a disaster to hit their business.

When it comes to communications, a hosted solution like Speakeasy Business VoIP offers unique operational benefits that can help protect a business in case of a minor disaster, such as an equipment failure, or a major catastrophic event, such as an earthquake.

This paper outlines the business continuity benefits of Hosted VoIP solutions and offers practical guidance for maximizing the Speakeasy Business VoIP advantage to recover seamlessly from virtually any communications disruption.

HOSTED VOIP vs. PREMISE-BASED PBX

Traditional business phone systems rely on an expensive piece of equipment called a PBX or private branch exchange. A PBX, even if it is IP-based, must be maintained on your premises. When a PBX phone system fails, callers hear a fast busy signal, meaning that nobody can communicate inbound or outbound. Maintaining or repairing a PBX typically requires on-site service from an outside vendor.

Hosted VoIP is different because PBX functionality is hosted by a VoIP provider on their servers. Only IP phones, a voice gateway, and broadband connectivity are required on-site for the small business owner. This reduces costs, eliminates maintenance, simplifies scaling, and offers significant business continuity advantages.

With Speakeasy Business VoIP, voicemail, call processing, and features are all tied to servers on a multi-redundant nationwide network. The servers that power the VoIP application are maintained in data center environments built to support hundreds of thousands of end users. Enterprise level features like redundant power, power backup, and multiple connections deliver uptime and reliability that small business owners could never afford on their premises.

Because Speakeasy Business VoIP is hosted on Speakeasy servers, callers will not receive a fast busy signal in the event of a line or equipment failure on the small business premises. The phone system continues to function virtually. Callers can still leave voicemail messages and calls can still be forwarded. The following pages offer more details about the business continuity benefits of Speakeasy's Hosted VoIP service.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY ADVANTAGES OF HOSTED VOIP

Below are the key business continuity benefits of Speakeasy's Hosted VoIP solution.

Voicemail Back-up

Voicemail service is hosted on Speakeasy's high-uptime multi-redundant network. In the event of a line or equipment failure on business premises, or even a major disaster, the voicemail system remains available to take inbound calls. The outage will be invisible to callers, and voicemail messages can be retrieved from an alternate phone.

Employees can choose to receive notifications of their voicemail messages via any email account. They can also receive audio (.wav) file copies of their voicemail messages as email attachments.

Auto Attendant

Auto Attendant is a popular Speakeasy Business VoIP add-on feature that serves as an automated receptionist. Like voicemail, Auto Attendant is hosted on the Speakeasy network, so even in the event of a line failure at the business location callers will not experience a busy signal. The Auto Attendant message can be customized from any location, so it also serves as an option for informing callers in the case of a more serious disaster or long-term interruption.

As a hosted feature, Auto Attendant is not constrained by the number of voice channels available. Therefore, any number of inbound calls can get through to Auto Attendant and be routed (to voicemail if the phone system is down).

Service Mobility

Since Hosted VoIP services are tied to servers on Speakeasy's network, relocating an entire system is far easier than rewiring a traditional PBX system, which can take weeks. If a major disaster hits, a business can move all employees to another facility with IP access and quickly establish a Disaster Recovery site with existing voice service.

A variety of EasyVoice plan features offer inbound calling redundancy to keep employees reachable in case of line or equipment failure. Employees can forward calls to another phone through the web portal from any computer with internet connectivity.

Hunt groups allow multiple users (regardless of location) to pick up inbound calls, even if some members of the hunt groups have lost service.

Speakeasy also supports PC or laptop based soft phone usage, so employees can work at home, on the road, or from another location with IP connectivity.

Remote Office

Remote Office allows employees to use any home phone, cell phone or even hotel phone as a business phone. Essentially, Remote Office creates a bridge between a Business VoIP number and an alternate phone, enabling individuals to stay available and maintain a professional image. Remote Office is an advanced VoIP feature included with Speakeasy's EasyVoice Global and ONE plans.

Remote Office can be activated from any computer via the Speakeasy web portal, or from the employee's own computer with the easy-to-use Outlook® Toolbar. When Remote Office is active, all calls to the Business VoIP phone number are automatically forwarded to the alternate phone number specified.

When employees make an outbound call through the web portal with the Remote Office feature active, the system first calls the employee's alternate phone number, and then places the call after the employee picks up. This method ensures that call recipients see the Business VoIP number on Caller ID, rather than the employee's home, cell, or other alternate phone number. In addition, calls are billed to the Business VOIP account.

Survivability

The option for SIP Survivability is a unique feature of the VoIP Gateway that not every provider delivers. SIP Survivability offers LAN-side call processing if the WAN link goes down so that all the phones at a business location can still make extension-to-extension calls to other on-site phones. This is an optional add on license that can be purchased for the VoIP Gateway.

DISASTER RECOVERY: MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF HOSTED VOIP

Taking full advantage of the powerful business continuity benefits of Hosted VoIP requires knowledge and preparation.

The following table outlines possible “disaster” events and the short and long-term recovery options available with Speakeasy Business VoIP. By incorporating these options in a comprehensive business continuity plan, businesses can respond seamlessly to unexpected events.

EVENT	BACK-UP SOLUTION (short-term)	SERVICE RECOVERY (long-term)
IP phone failure	Call Forwarding (web portal) Remote Office (premium users) Softphone (if available) Remote access to Voicemail	Next-day or 3-day shipping of replacement phone, if purchased from Speakeasy 12 month warranty
Customer LAN failure	Call Forwarding Remote Office Remote access to Voicemail	Speakeasy assistance in trouble isolation, customer’s responsibility to repair.
VoIP Gateway failure	Same as above	VoIP Gateway replacement during warranty 4 hour replacement in major markets
Router failure	Same as above	Router replacement – usually within 4 hours for Speakeasy T1 service
Line failure	Same as above	Manual switch to backup circuit if available For T1 lines, Speakeasy guarantees hardware replacement or on-site troubleshooting within 4 hours.
Major disaster at site (hurricane, earthquake, fire, flood, etc.)	Same as above	Service relocation to any other site where IP service is available New connectivity Replacement VoIP Gateway and phones shipped overnight or 3-day if purchased from Speakeasy No new telephone numbers / PBX required.