

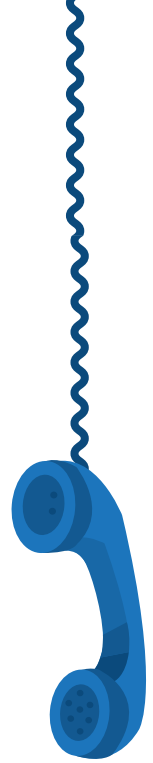
KEEPING THE PHONE LINES OPEN

BUSINESS CONTINUITY TIPS AND INSIGHTS FOR YOUR PHONE SYSTEM



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INTRODUCTION

Companies rely on their telephone and voice systems to maintain services and products to their customers. Yet many experience outages with no plans in place to ensure a speedy recovery.

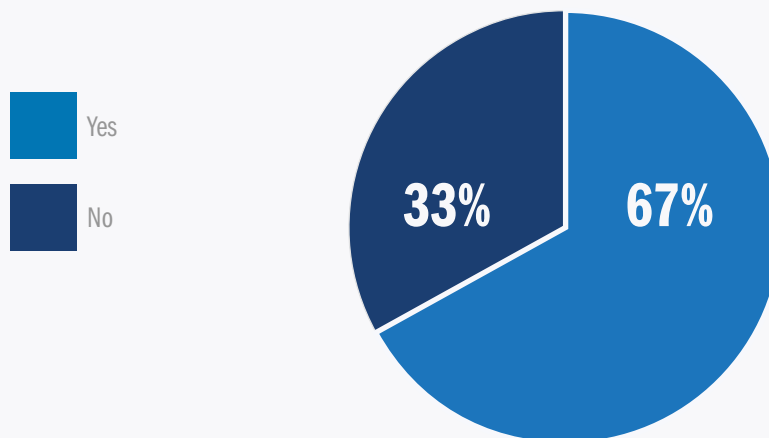
Spiceworks recently conducted a survey on behalf of Cox Business with more than 300 U.S. IT professionals from companies with 20 to 99 employees to understand how they manage business continuity and redundancy around their current telephone and voice systems.

The study was eye-opening in that more than two-thirds of respondents have experienced phone or voice outages. And of that group, nearly 75% described the outages as severe enough to negatively affect their business. Surprisingly, despite the risk and ramifications, 60% of respondents admitted they do not have a redundancy plan in place.

For many companies, phone systems are the lifeline to their customers. Even with the Internet, companies still count on the phone as a quick and more personal means to communicate with customers who drive their business or depend on their products and services. But when the lines go down, employees turn to IT. And for a small or mid-sized company, the “IT department” can mean a team of one. Therefore, a solid business continuity plan cannot only help maintain uptime to keep businesses running, it can also reduce the headaches and fires IT has to deal with when an outage occurs.

This whitepaper takes a deeper look into the Spiceworks survey results and provides insights to the common causes of voice failures, how companies deal with voice outages today, and how to determine the right business continuity solution for your company’s telephone needs.

HAS YOUR COMPANY EVER EXPERIENCED A VOICE SERVICE OUTAGE?



HOW OUTAGES OCCUR

As previously stated, 67% of survey respondents state their company has experienced a voice outage. Phone outages can be caused by a number of factors such as weather, a growing workforce or traffic spikes during peak call times. Other factors are more equipment-based like faulty wiring and equipment breakage.

Problems can also occur from what is described as “over the top” VoIP phone service providers, which operate over networks hosted by a different Internet service provider. It’s not uncommon that when one goes down, the other is to be blamed, resulting in a lot of finger pointing.

Outages can come in many forms:

- PBX failures
- Service provider failures
- Internal and telecom infrastructure outages

While companies may have control over some of the factors that cause an outage, many do not, which is why it is important for companies to fully understand the consequences when an outage occurs.

67%

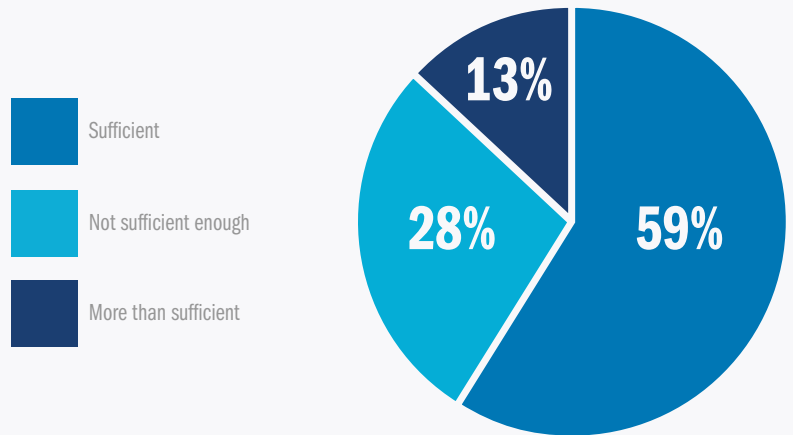
of survey respondents state their company has experienced a voice outage



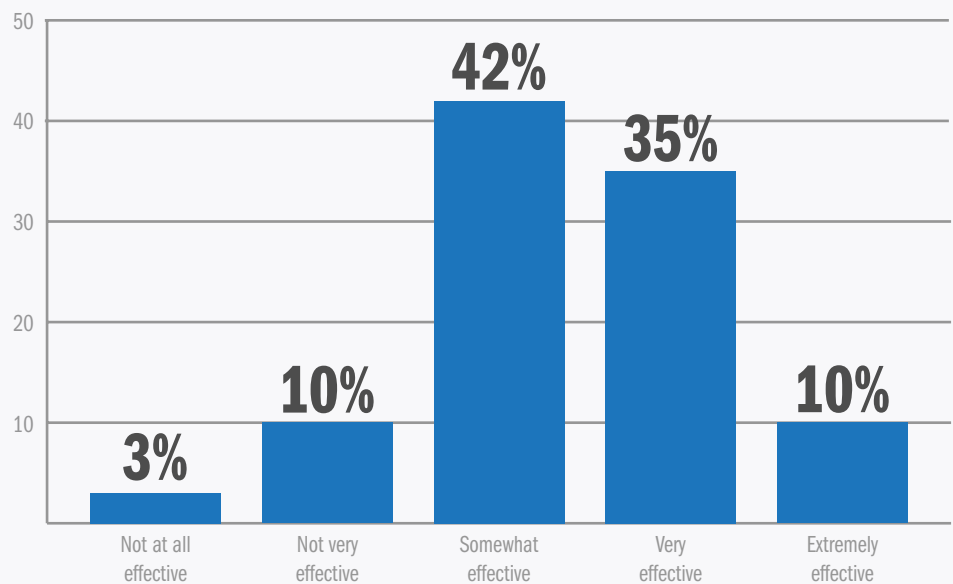
HOW SMBS DEAL WITH VOICE BUSINESS CONTINUITY TODAY

Today mid-size businesses are attempting to develop their own business continuity programs for voice with varying degrees of success. While many do not have a redundancy plan in place, of those that do, nearly 30% believe their company's plan is not sufficient, and 55% state it is only "somewhat" to "not at all" effective.

DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR COMPANY'S TELEPHONE SYSTEM REDUNDANCY PLAN IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOUR COMPANY'S NEEDS?

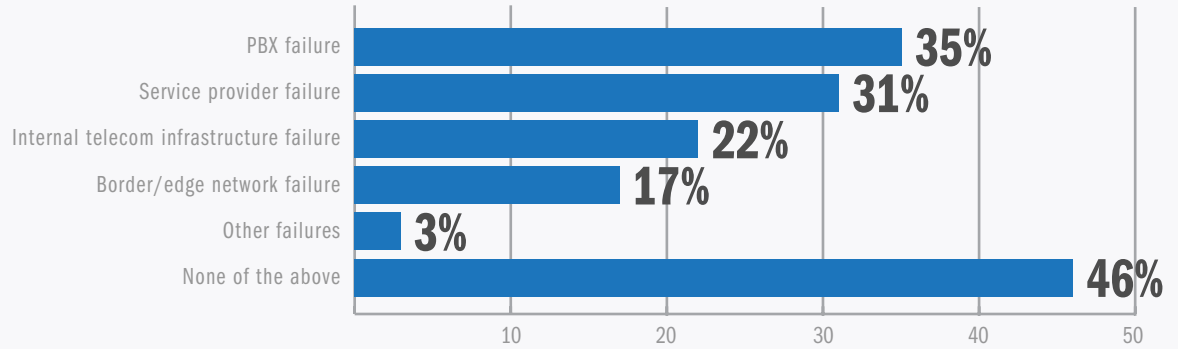


HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR CURRENT REDUNDANCY PLAN FOR YOUR COMPANY'S VOICE SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE?



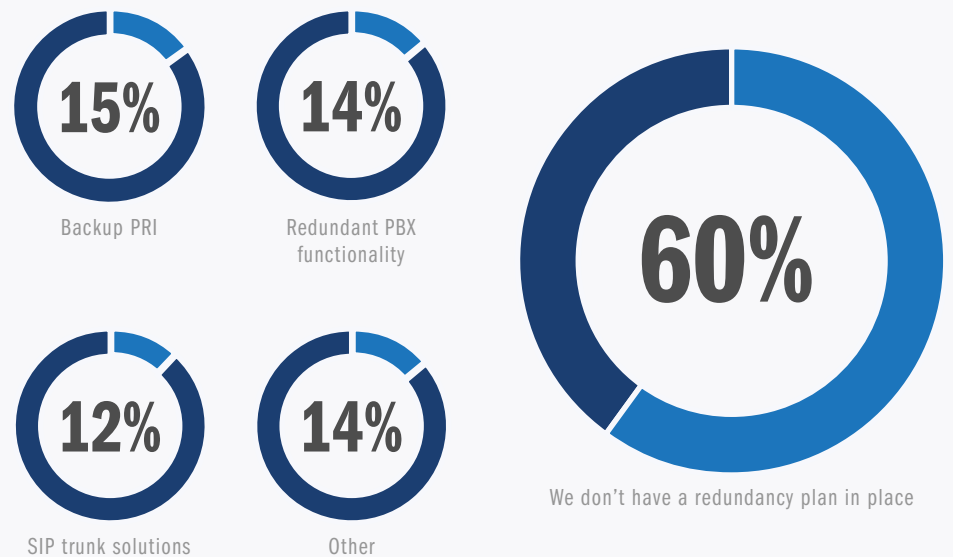
So what are mid-size companies doing to maintain business continuity with their voice solution? While nearly half (46%) do not have anything in place to cover failures, 35% have a plan in place to cover PBX failure, 31% to cover service provider failure, 22% to cover internal telecom infrastructure failure, and 17% to cover border/edge network failures.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN FOR YOUR TELEPHONE SYSTEM COVER?



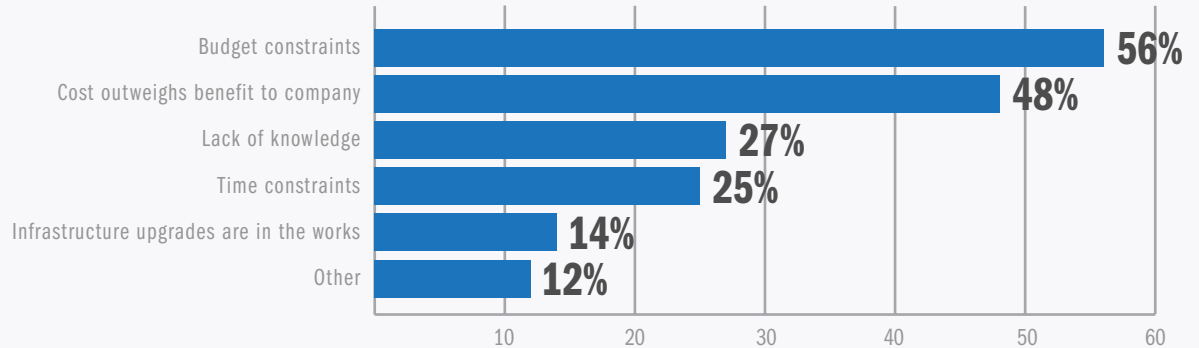
Only 40% of IT pros state they have a redundancy solution in place for their voice and telephone system with the top solutions being backup PRI, redundant PBX functionality and SIP trunk solutions.

WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY CURRENTLY HAVE IN PLACE TO MAINTAIN BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND REDUNDANCY IN CASE OF A TELEPHONE SERVICE OUTAGE?



So the question is: With so many companies impacted by outages, why aren't more mid-market companies ensuring they have a redundancy plan in place? Well it comes down to money. Of the respondents whose company does not have a redundancy plan in place, 56% state it is due to budget constraints, and 48% believe the cost outweighs the benefit. Reasons beyond cost include overloaded IT departments, with 27% stating lack of knowledge on redundancy plans for voice and 25% stating time constraints. Infrastructure upgrades are in the works for 14% and other reasons for 12%.

WHY HASN'T YOUR COMPANY IMPLEMENTED A REDUNDANCY PLAN FOR THEIR TELEPHONE / VOICE INFRASTRUCTURE?



THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY

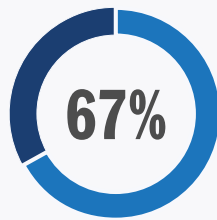
CONSEQUENCES

of not having a business continuity plan in place far outweighs the cost.

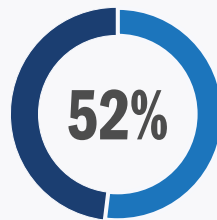
While the cost of deploying a business continuity plan for voice might seem high to a mid-size company, the ramifications of not having one can be worse. The amount of time the phones are down can directly impact sales and revenue. In addition, interruptions to customer service, especially during high-volume periods can damage a company's reputation and brand.

Of the respondents who have experienced an outage, nearly three-quarters state their business was impacted due to disruption of business operations, loss of user productivity, missed revenue and loss of productivity for IT pros. And while there are many scenarios that can be imaged around phone outages, nearly all will result in additional work for IT.

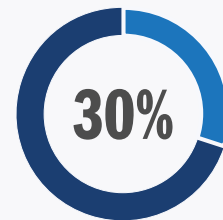
WHAT WERE THE BUSINESS IMPACTS OF THAT OUTAGE?



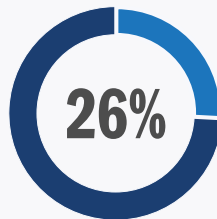
Disruption of business operations



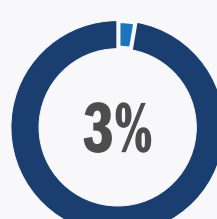
Loss of user productivity



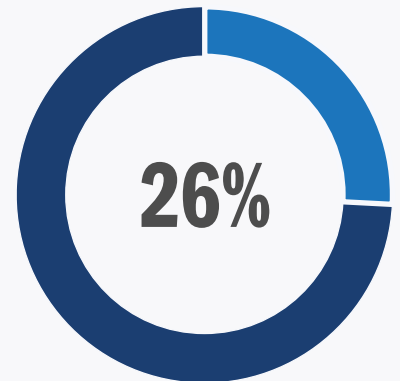
Missed revenue or business opportunities



Lost productivity for IT pros



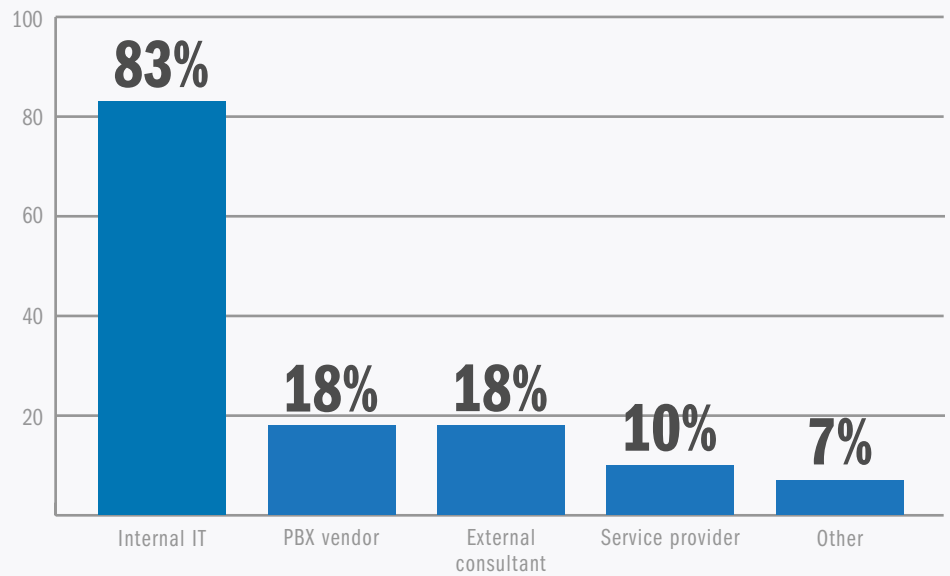
Other



There was no significant impact

When a small or mid-size company deploys business continuity measures, it is usually the IT manager who is held accountable for development, management and testing. As most SMB IT departments are already overworked, the additional responsibility of business continuity can serve as a distraction from the usual responsibilities of keeping the lights on and driving innovation. Worse, when the phones go down, fingers often point to IT.

WHO DEVELOPED AND MANAGES YOUR COMPANY'S BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN?



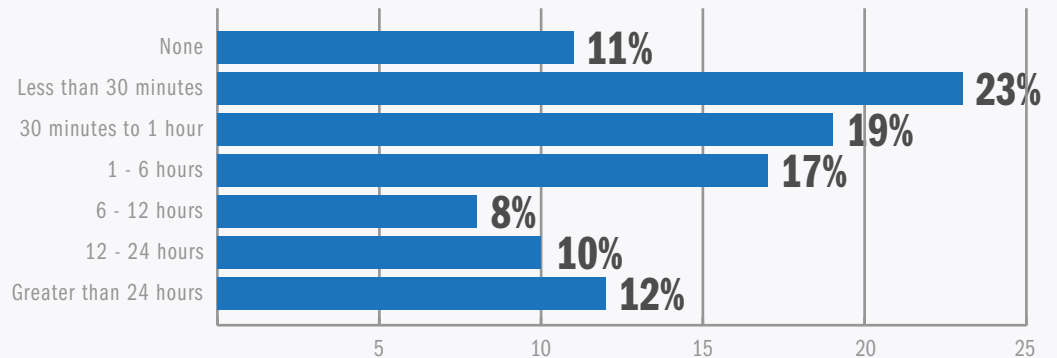
IT MANAGERS
are usually responsible for development, management and testing of the business continuity plan.

FINDING THE RIGHT BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Determining the right business continuity plan for a company takes a little bit of analysis. First, a company needs to know how the business would be impacted. This would be an internal review of actual dollars lost during downtime combined with the loss of productivity for both employees, as well as IT departments who have to drop everything to get phone lines back up.

Second, based on that information, how long of a voice outage is the company willing to withstand? This can vary by company and how important phone and voice are to driving the business. The results from the survey show that IT pros were mixed on how long of an outage their company could withstand. While 11% of respondents stated their company could not withstand any downtime, 12% stated they could withstand more than 24 hours. More than half of respondents said they would need their system back up within an hour.

THINKING ABOUT THE REDUNDANCY PLAN YOU HAVE IN PLACE FOR YOUR COMPANY'S TELEPHONE SYSTEM, HOW LONG OF A VOICE OUTAGE IS YOUR COMPANY WILLING TO WITHSTAND?



IS YOUR COMPANY IN DANGER OF AN OUTAGE?

The following 10 questions can help you further analyze how likely an outage is to occur and identify how important a redundancy plan is for your company:

1 Is your business located in a geographic region that is prone to disasters, such as weather, fire, floods or earthquakes?

6 Do you have another location to automatically reroute calls to in the event of a service disruption?

2 Is the business dependent on phone service for sales or customer service?

7 Would a drop in service affect SLAs in place with your business?

3 Does down time equate to lost revenue?

8 Have you inspected the wiring and infrastructure behind your phone service?

4 Would downtime damage the company's brand or expose the company to litigation?

9 Do you have periods, seasonal or promotional, that cause excessive spikes in phone volumes?

5 Does IT have the appropriate resources to deploy, manage and test a redundancy program?

10 Do you anticipate a growth in users in the next year, either by new hiring or potential acquisitions?

BUSINESS CONTINUITY WITH COX BUSINESS PHONE SOLUTIONS

If these steps seem outside your range of work or resources, Cox Business can partner with you to implement a business continuity plan with built-in disaster features for business phone services.

COX BUSINESS

can help you implement a business continuity plan with built-in disaster features for business phone services.

Cox Business serves more than 300,000 customers in 19 states including retailers, professional services, start-ups, healthcare providers, schools from K-12 to higher education, financial institutions and government organizations. Cox offers voice, Internet, and video services over a single solid network for reliable service and solid connections.

Their products and services include the following:

Voice Manager IP Centrex

Advanced phone features in a cloud-based hosted VoIP phone system. The service provides an alternative to traditional PBX systems and unites your business under a single communications platform. Unlike Internet phone providers that do not own or manage their network, IP Centrex combines both for accountability and quick resolution.

Other features include:

- Inherent business continuity and disaster recovery services over a robust, private network
- Hardware that does not require upfront investments
- The ability to route calls to sales, customer services or other parts of your business
- The ability to route calls to cell phones if the main line goes down

SIP Trunking Service

Business voice over IP technology with tailored, cost-effective voice service, scalable features and end-user mobility options that increase productivity and integrate well with your existing communications network. If your phone service is interrupted, COX SIP Trunking enables incoming calls to be routed to another trunk group, different phone numbers including cell phones, or alternate locations so you can continue to communicate with your customers.

The service is supported 24/7 over a self-healing network to keep the phone lines up and running. It also offers an option to automatically expand capacity when call volumes spike.

Business Voice Manager

Business phone services that can be managed over your PC. Voice Manager includes the Cox Business Service Assurance Plan that protects against unexpected inside wiring problems. Should you require repairs to a voice or a voice/data outlet, you are insured

CONCLUSION

Phone service business continuity can be critical, but few IT professionals have the time or resources to take on this task. Cox Business can help reduce the risks and workload by partnering with you on a business continuity plan that protects your business and keeps the phone lines working. Cox Business offers a complete portfolio of voice systems that will fit the needs of a small start-up company to a large business or institution. With a reliable network and inherent business continuity features, Cox can help a business of any size keep the phone lines up and running.

Learn more with Cox Business customer stories

[Download the case study »](#)

Spiceworks survey conducted on behalf of Cox Business in September 2013 with 317 IT pros in the United States.

