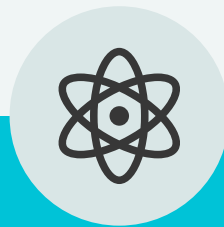# flowroute®

How to choose a VoIP provider

11 tips for choosing the right business SIP trunking provider.

Innovation wins.

The argument for enterprise SIP trunking is undeniable. Infonetics Research says 58% of businesses plan to implement cost and process efficiencies with SIP by 2015. That's a 50% growth in less than two years.

SIP trunking dramatically cuts your communication costs, maximizes bandwidth, interconnects disparate technologies (in a time when we use more disparate technologies than ever before), and modernizes existing legacy equipment. It's not a passing trend. **It's the way forward for business**, and it's smart strategy.

You don't want to be left behind while competitors innovate, so you're looking into SIP trunking for your business. But your communications are too important to trust to just any provider.

You know to look at price. And you've read reviews. Every provider claims to be exactly what you need. To find out who's right, you need to dig deeper.

Enterprises: Which PBX trunking services will you use by February 2015?

![flowroute logo]
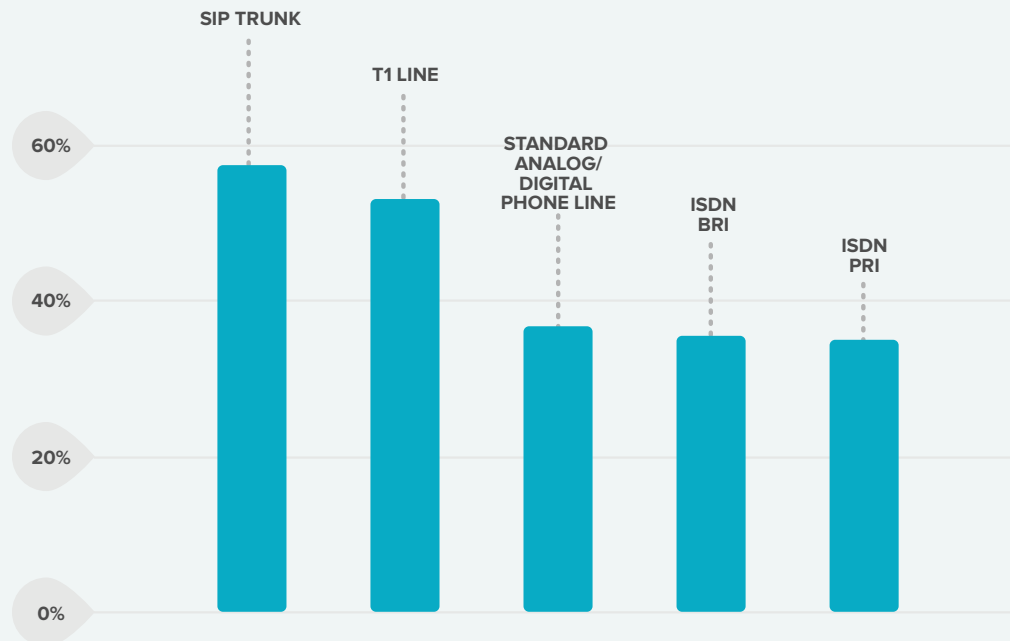
Trust the experts.

Mark Crane has been working in VoIP for over a decade. As the creator of FusionPBX, a dynamic voice, fax, and application server and interface, he's evaluated and used more than 50 service providers. He's seen the good, the bad, and the must-be-avoided-at-all-costs.

Based on his extensive experience working with, and rescuing clients from, SIP trunking providers of all shapes and sizes, Mark evaluates his options using these 11 criteria.
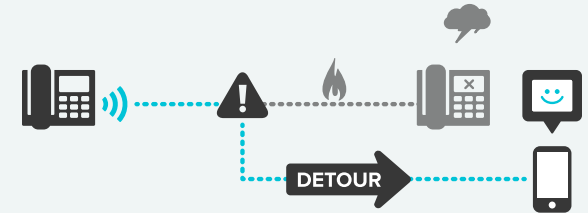
1. Control
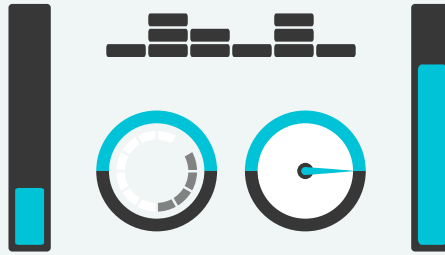
One of the most beneficial aspects of SIP trunking is the level of control it affords.

Look for an intuitive interface you can use to make account updates without consulting support. That includes the ability to modify or add additional phone numbers, services, and **features in real-time with immediate activation**.

2. Reliability

A well built platform you can count on is founded on infrastructure and functionality rather than delivering "bargain basement prices".

Truly reliable providers have geographically redundant infrastructure that keeps their system operational in the event of a catastrophe at one location. For maximum reliability, **phone numbers must failover to protect you from loss of Internet service**. So that calls are automatically forwarded to a cellphone or another SIP URI or phone number if your SIP trunk is inaccessible.

3. Support

If you lack SIP trunking expertise in house, work with a service provider that delivers expert phone support.

It is crucial to be able to troubleshoot issues with your VoIP connection. Mark says he recommends that people new to SIP trunking, "only work with providers that have people accessible on the phone that can take a look and help troubleshoot the issue."

Knowledge and response time are two key factors to analyze when comparing support offerings. Submit a ticket, or call support to gauge the level of service you can expect from the providers you are considering.

4. Instant Activation

Your business needs to move at your pace, not at the convenience of your provider.

The changes you make to your account should **take effect immediately**. That includes account activation, and the addition of phone numbers, account services, and calling features. Providers that require time to update your account inhibit your ability to react responsively to your business needs.

5. Quality

The quality of your voice connections is crucial to your ability to conduct business.

Customers, vendors, and prospects need to be able to understand what you're saying. Choppy phone quality reflects badly on your brand image and turns people off dealing with your organization. **Try the audio** before you finalize your decision. Providers confident in their product offer new customers test credit. Set up a trial to be sure you don't hear choppiness, delays in audio delivery, or static in the background.

6. Price

SIP trunking offers significant cost savings, but squeezing every last fraction of a penny out of your connection is a mistake.

Mark explains. "If you go too low, and scrape the bottom of the barrel, you end up paying the price in quality and service." Delivering quality SIP trunking service requires significant equipment to process traffic loads, and **the most reliable routes are seldom the cheapest ones**. All too often, businesses move to cheaper providers only to eventually switch back because the quality was poor.

7. Pre-paid
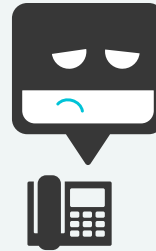
Many organizations are surprised to learn pre-paid service is actually better for business.

It makes sense that companies prefer to hold onto their money as long as they can. But Mark advises that pre-paid phone service **protects your account against fraud** by limiting your exposure to existing account credit. If your post-paid SIP trunking account is compromised by fraudsters, the potential damage is almost limitless. There are cases of small businesses receiving bills for over $500,000 after criminals accessed their account.

8. Compatibility
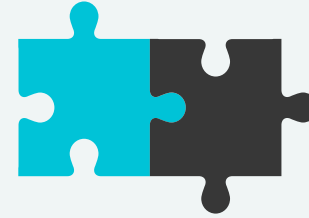
Save by using network infrastructure you already have in place.

You may have telecommunications equipment you want to keep using, if you can. Using SIP as a technology bridge, it is often possible to **integrate existing equipment** with a new interface. To save costs, and ease your transition to SIP trunking, find a provider that can integrate with your existing setup without the hassle of lengthy and tedious testing.

9. Service Specialization

Work with specialized partners for greater customization around your specific needs.

A provider that is dedicated to delivering one component of your telephone system will offer greater expertise, support, and typically, a stronger solution. Mark asserts, "The devices and services that work best in the industry are the ones that are **focused on a specialization**, like carriers that only provide service vs. managing equipment and hosting too."

10. Carrier-grade platform

The foundation of your system will dictate its strength.

Some platforms are built with **more care, and greater load tolerance** than others. Certain open source platforms used by some carriers shouldn't be considered carrier-grade. In those cases, the platform routing your phone calls in is danger of failing due to traffic overload. Ask potential carriers which platform they're using and do some research. If you find complaints about downtime and poor audio quality your business will most likely be better served elsewhere.

11. Viability

Your phone lines are too crucial to put in the hands of a business that's on the brink of collapse.

Mark has lost phone numbers permanently when a provider he was using suddenly closed its doors. Provider failure is difficult to predict, but there are warning signs that will help you foresee the downfall of carriers you're considering. **Choose a carrier that doesn't look like a flash in the pan**. To protect your phone numbers and phone service, find a provider that is profitable and has a strong business foundation with a good support staff behind it.

But strong doesn't necessarily mean big. "A smaller company is going to be more supportive and available," advises Mark. "I like working with providers where I can feel like customer input actually matters, and that I'm going to be listened to."

Your time is worth the time.

Choosing the right SIP trunking provider can feel like a daunting task that requires a large time commitment.

You don't want to have to find a new provider every quarter. By using these criteria to plan your decision making in advance, you can save time, and be confident you'll find a provider that will serve your business needs for years to come.

Flowroute is a state-of-the-art SIP trunking service, designed and built from the ground up to provide simplified and direct access to the global telephone network.

We break barriers to empower businesses with granular service control, quality connections, account flexibility and platform scalability.

For more information about why we're the experts' SIP trunking choice:

🏠 **www.flowroute.com**

📶 **blog.flowroute.com**

📞 **1-855-FLOW-ROUTE** (356-9768)

✉ **hello@flowroute.com**