SIP IS THE FUTURE

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Introduction

There is a looming deadline for UK businesses still using an ISDN communications system.

While this form of telecommunication has been used for over 30 years, time is now running out to make the change to a cloud-based solution – because BT are switching off their ISDN network completely in 2025.

> This white paper discusses the benefits of moving from ISDN to a more agile and reliable SIP trunking phone system, why your business should be considering changing now, and what to look for in a communications provider to help you make the move.

The end of ISDN in 2025

Despite the death knell being sounded as far back as 10 years ago when it was removed from consumer use[1], many UK businesses still rely on Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN) technology for their communications.

ISDN is the traditional workhorse of business telecommunications. A relatively reliable technology that utilises ordinary telephone copper wire to digitally transmit speech and data on the same line. And since its appearance in the mid-1980s, it has proved popular for businesses in providing voice and data connectivity.

However, questions have been asked about whether ISDN was a 'dying technology' for many years now, and they were answered in 2015 when BT announced their plan to completely switch off the ISDN network in 2025.

With a firm cut-off date in mind, and with investment into the technology suggested to stop as early as 2020[2], this gives UK businesses limited time to find an alternative solution or risk their communication lines being cut off.

Why you need to find an alternative now

It's an exciting time to be in business, with heightened connectivity allowing for faster, smarter working in and out of the office. Yet with every new accessible advance, the opportunity arises for more low-overhead, digital-savvy start-ups to flood the market.

In order to stay competitive in this changing economic landscape, your business needs to be able to demonstrate its reliability, agility, and flexibility – and it follows that your communication tools need to do the same.

The announcement of BT's intention to end their ISDN network in 2025 comes as no surprise to those in the industry. Aside from its reliance on physical infrastructure – which can take up valuable office space, and cost significantly in terms of resources to maintain, update, and fix – ISDN also struggles to cope with the needs of the modern business. Especially when it comes to implementing remote telecommunications connectivity for an increasingly mobile, 24/7-connected workforce.

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[1] Ward, Mark. "Broadband Kills off Consumer ISDN." *BBC News*, BBC, 3 April 2007
[2] Scroxton, Alex. "ISDN's Days Are Numbered: What Should You Do?" *ComputerWeekly*, 3 November 2016

Quite simply, ISDN is no longer capable of providing businesses with the technological edge and flexibility they need to meet the demand of their customers. Yes, with 7 years still to go until the ISDN network is no more, it might seem like you have ages to make the move to a new method of telecommunications. But with all your competitors taking advantage of the benefits of alternative solutions – like SIP – can your business really afford to wait?

> **"** ISDN WAS ARGUABLY THE BACKBONE OF MODERN BUSINESS. BUT IN A MARKETPLACE WHERE 'ALWAYS-ON' COMMUNICATION IS KEY, BUSINESSES STILL RELYING ON THIS SYSTEM WILL SOON STRUGGLE TO KEEP UP WITH THEIR COMPETITORS AND SATISFY CUSTOMERS.

Alan Scully | Communications Director of Seriun

SIP: an exciting telecommunications alternative

The answer to the ISDN problem is to replace it with a more flexible, cloud-based solution.

Session Initiated Protocol (SIP) trunking is seen as the natural, future-ready successor to ISDN. A virtual IP-based service, it connects a company's internal Private Branch Exchange (PBX) to the provider's national network via broadband, ethernet, or a private circuit – using network data connectivity instead of dedicated fixed-line technology.

The range of benefits of SIP over ISDN, include:

- **Saving you money**
  Fewer lines needed with SIP trunking means you could reduce your costs by up to 50% on line rental, plus the cost of physical infrastructure and maintenance. Many SIP providers also offer cost savings with inclusive minutes as part of the monthly fee.

- **Flexible for growth**
  As the system isn't as reliant on fixed lines, it is entirely scalable with minimum fuss. Implementation of additional lines or locations can be done easily, and because your phone number is attached to an IP address (not a physical line) you can take it with you wherever you go.

- **Increased integration**
  SIP phone systems can be integrated with business applications (e.g. Skype for Business) and other collaboration tools, for more integrated and efficient working across your business.

- **Added reliability**
  ISDN's fixed lines mean that when things go down, they can go down for days, and you have to rely on your provider to fix the problem. With a SIP cloud-based approach, there are built-in solutions (like call plans with immediate redirects of calls to wherever you need) that can keep your business going even when there's an issue.

How to move from ISDN to SIP

There are three key steps in moving from ISDN to SIP:

1. Working with your communications partner, plan out an appropriate method of switching your business with minimum disruption (including costing). This could be all in one go or, a phased approach, with SIP sitting alongside your ISDN until you're ready to turn the latter off. This will include an audit of the current system to determine the service provision needed to meet the business demands.

2. Your communications partner will then begin the installation process, followed by a thorough testing phase – with built-in business continuity features and integrated business applications.

3. Finally, it's time to go live! Which should be a simple and stress-free process, as long as steps 1 and 2 have been adhered to properly, with an experienced communications partner.

What to look for in a communications partner

Partnering with an external communications partner is usually the best way to ensure your technological set-up is tailored to allow your business to run at its best. This is especially true for those small to mid-sized businesses without an internal IT team of their own to assess their telecommunication needs and/or tailor an efficient alternative solution to ISDN.

You want a partner who understands SIP and how it can take your company to the next level. Find someone who can talk to you about the benefits and how they translate for your particular business now, as well as what they can offer you in the future.

Avoid any communications provider out there who sees continuing with an ISDN solution as the right thing to do. It may be more profitable to them, but they aren't considering the needs of your business as it grows in the future. With ISDN set to be obsolete in 2025, a move to an alternative solution needs to be made – and soon.

Seriun

Seriun provides support to local and large organisations, Betfred, O2 & others. We invest in leading systems to deliver exceptional services to thousands of working people.

Our unified telecommunications approach means that we can offer our customers a range of services to make their business smarter, including everything from telephone systems and hardware implementation to call recording/reporting, SIP disaster recovery, PCI compliance, and VoIP internet broadband and cloud-based telephone services.