

Scaling business communications for a better global presence

by Arash Hekmat



It's no small feat scaling a successful business to new markets. There are countless hurdles ready to trip up even the most sure-footed and enterprising of companies. From currency fluctuations, tax laws and culture fit to employment regulations and the availability of local infrastructure – it takes a great deal of planning and investment to create a sustainable presence in new markets.

At the heart of this planning should be a sound strategy for business communications. This covers everything from how you interact with the outside world of prospects, partners and customers to intra-office collaboration.

It's an area that is often overlooked at the start, but one that can quickly become a full-time headache for IT managers and CIOs looking to cut their spiraling comms bills down the line.

Bloated legacy solutions can leave global businesses resembling a lumbering ocean tanker, incapable of responding to change in an agile manner and costing a fortune to operate. On the other hand, cloud-based solutions can help you cut costs and scale flexibly. But to switch from one to the other can be a monumental undertaking for any business that needs to continue uninterrupted with day-to-day operations.

It also requires a large amount of legal expertise to navigate the tangled regulatory web that exists in the communications space, with each country providing a fresh set of challenges to your efforts to establish a local presence.

In the following paragraphs, we will look at some of the regulatory, infrastructure and channel obstacles you are likely to face; and how best to cost-effectively navigate them.



1: Regulatory compliance

You already know there are serious implications for failing to comply with local employment, corporate and tax laws when scaling your business. This is especially true for disruptive businesses. Just think of Google's aborted attempts to enter the [heavily regulated and censored Chinese market](#). Or the difficulties facing gig economy platforms, epitomized by Deliveroo's legal wranglings over the [classification and employment status of its riders](#) in the UK.

But have you considered how business telephony regulations differ between countries? To operate a geographic number in France is very different from doing the same in Norway or Brazil.

In Germany, you need to register an address within the area code of the requested phone number. In Denmark, it is possible to register with any address in the country, while regulators in Mexico let you do so with any international address. Singapore has no such location restriction.

Even the registration process can vary dramatically from one country to the next.

To register for a geographic number in South Korea, a utility bill will suffice. But in Italy, a National Telephone Directory System (ETNA) has been put in place to provide the country's law enforcement authorities with electronic access to end-user data – so the registration process is much stricter, requiring a Passport or National ID for an individual and Business or VAT Number for a company.

Here's what the process looks like when you need to do it in Cyrillic.

Соглашение
Об оказании услуг телефонной связи

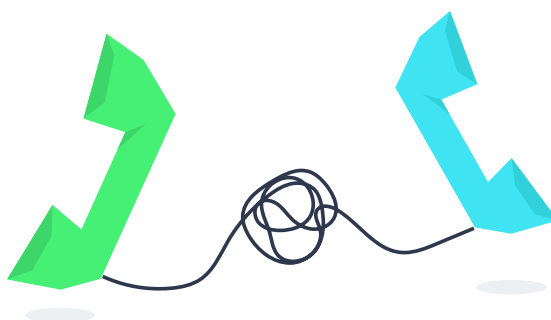
Общество с ограниченной ответственностью «ЮнитТелеком» (далее – Оператор), в лице генерального директора Васенкова Александра Николаевича, действующей на основании устава, предлагает любому физическому или юридическому лицу (далее – Абонент) доступ к услугам телефонной связи (далее – Услуги).

Подписывая настоящее Соглашение Абонент соглашается с условиями предоставления услуги.

1. ТЕРМИНЫ И ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ

2.

1.1. «**Абонент**» - любое совершеннолетнее дееспособное физическое лицо или юридическое лицо, нуждающееся в Услуге и имеющее техническую возможность ее получать.



The devil in the details

These restrictions can significantly impact the available use cases for different number types. Usually, toll-free numbers can be registered internationally, which is ideal for businesses establishing a centralized contact center capable of receiving customer calls from multiple territories.

But in Germany and the Netherlands, anyone operating a toll-free line must formally agree with the regulator that they will be using that specific number, which means becoming a known party to the regulator by submitting the appropriate documentation.

For geographic numbers where there are stricter address requirements, businesses

will need an existing physical presence before they can add voice. Regulators are beginning to migrate away from paper forms in favour of electronic applications, but it can still be an arduous process.

Let's consider one more local regulatory peculiarity facing businesses attempting to scale their communications into certain markets. In several Southeast Asian markets, despite a growing acceptance of VoIP services, there are still strict requirements that local call traffic does not exit the country in SIP format, meaning a secondary international PSTN number is required to forward calls out of the country before they can then be transcoded back into SIP and sent to your infrastructure.

Getting it right every time

To say that there is a tangled global web of communications regulations is something of an understatement! Each time you enter a new market, a labyrinthine maze of red tape awaits, often in a language that you have no expertise – legal or otherwise. Without the proper expertise, that dull regulatory headache you already feel coming on can quickly develop into a full-blown global compliance migraine that will take more than painkillers to shift. When it comes to setting up your business

communications, it's imperative to work with providers who are experts in regulatory compliance no matter the country or language. This way, they can help you to ensure you are always of your regulatory requirements and that your communications are fully compliant. Because compliance is the only way to guarantee quality, consistency and long-term availability.

2: Scalability

If you've read this far, you've probably got a sense of how slow the process of establishing a voice presence in another country can be with traditional telecoms providers. Understanding the regulations that apply in a specific country and overcoming the language and culture barriers is no mean feat.

If you also need to add premise-based infrastructure such as a private-branch exchange (PBX) to the equation, the outlay in terms of time and money becomes very,

very steep before a phone even so much as rings for the first time.

Scaling in a manner that is rapid and cost-effective is one area where cloud communications really excel. You can grow your telephony footprint on demand, just as you do with any other cloud-based infrastructure service. No more hardware investments that need to be justified with hefty ROIs. No more jamming up your legal department with endless carrier and regulatory agreements.

One consolidated network

By switching to an on-demand communications-as-a-service (CaaS) model, businesses can cut costs significantly by foregoing a dedicated telephony network and using their existing data infrastructure for voice – thanks to the power of SIP.

This VoIP technology enables media including voice to be transmitted over data networks up to and including the internet in a format that can then be transcribed into a PSTN-compliant signal for handing off to a country's national telephone infrastructure.

As far as the calling and receiving parties are concerned, the conversation is no

different in terms of audio quality or presentation than if it had been made using a legacy landline – especially if your SIP trunk provider supports the ability to make local outbound calls.

By routing these calls using in-country infrastructure, they can be presented as true domestic calls, without the need to display an international prefix. This is a huge boon to business, as research shows that local presence dialing can have a big impact on bottom lines. This is because consumers are [four times more likely to answer a local call](#) than one that comes from a toll-free number (a telltale sign that it's a business calling).

Communication automation

Another major way that cloud communications allow for smoother scaling lies in automation. Everything from the submission of regulatory documents to porting requests, number provisioning and inventory checks can be programmed using flexible communications APIs (Application Programming Interfaces). These interfaces allow developers to automate the otherwise laborious manual tasks required to establish a voice presence, without the need for human input beyond basic oversight of reporting.

And it's not just in the establishment of voice services that a programmable approach shines. The power of voice is in creating meaningful 1:1 and small-group interactions. But when you need to go wider, SMS is a more effective mode of

communication.

In fact, [64% of consumers with texting capabilities](#) prefer it to voice as a customer service channel.

Why bring this up? Because SMS is a great channel for programmable comms. You can automate everything from order confirmations and dispatch notices to arrival alerts and billing enquiries and do this on a scale that just wouldn't be possible for a communication channel that requires human input. The fact that [90% texts are read within three minutes](#) is just the cherry on top of the customer engagement cake.

3: Channels of communication

On the topic of SMS (you read the previous section, right?), another important consideration to make when scaling your business communications is which channels you need in a particular territory – and that depends largely on

your use case. There are more channels than ever that you can use for local presence. Let's look at voice. Even a humble DID phone number comes in a variety of flavors: toll-free, geographic, national or mobile.

Toll free numbers

With toll-free, it is the entity operating the number that pays the charge for making a

call, not the dialing party. For this reason, toll-free excels as an inbound channel for

contact centers. Beyond the fact you don't aggravate customers by making them pay

to talk to you, toll-free also lets you present one number across all regions in a country.

Geographic numbers

If you require a more unique local presence, geographic numbers that include an area code prefix are more effective, especially if you intend to make outbound calls as well. As mentioned earlier, [local calls are four times more likely](#) to be answered than toll-

free ones. Whether for customer-facing operations or internal business telephony in countries where you have multiple locations, geographic numbers provide plenty of flexibility.

National numbers

Allow you to generate a national presence that ensures you are fully available to prospects, partners, third parties and any

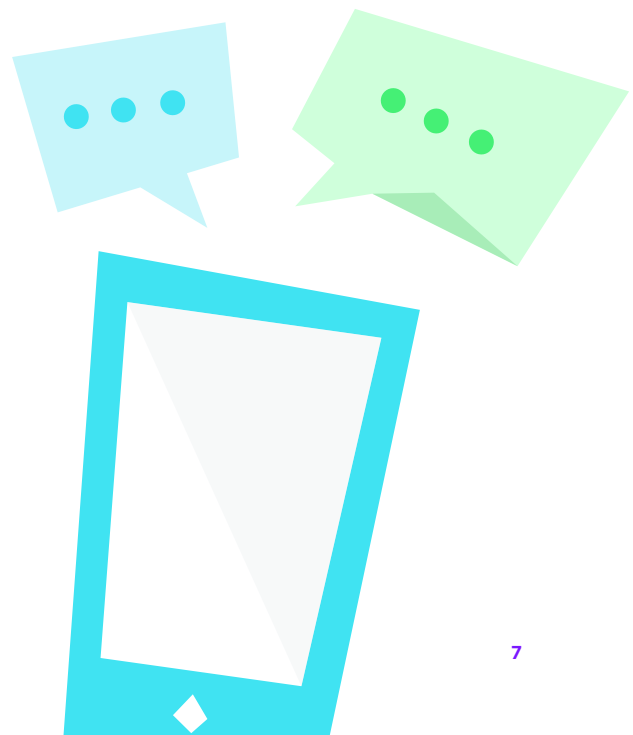
other entity you don't wish to provide with no-cost access via a toll-free number.

Mobile numbers

Mobile numbers are integral to an omni-channel strategy because they allow for two-way SMS and voice all on one number, creating a more seamless customer experience in the process. Nowadays, [35% of consumers expect](#) to be able to contact the same customer service representative by any channel.

That's why it's becoming so important to ensure that your communications and CRM solutions can play nice together. Omni-channel engagement is crucial to customer retention. Contact centers

that perform well here [retain twice the percentage](#) of customers as those with weaker or no strategy in place – 77% compared to 35%.



Choosing the right provider

The aim of this ebook is not to scare you away from scaling your business, but to emphasise that there are very real technical and regulatory hurdles you must surmount in order to do so in a way that is compliant and cost-effective.

At Voxbone, we aim to take the complexity out of global business communications by helping you to solve as many of these challenges as possible.

Our mission is to make business communications strangely simple and we do this by providing businesses with the tools to easily create a globe-spanning, full-featured voice and messaging stack, backed by a global voice and media network that delivers carrier-grade quality and reliability into 60+ markets. Together, these represent more than 92% of the world economy.

We have regulatory expertise in each of the territories where we operate and pride ourselves on the lengths we will go to help facilitate effective communications for

our customers. Everything from automating the submission of address documentation and porting requests with APIs, to translating application forms, sharing updates on regulatory initiatives such as ETNA in Italy and building technical methodologies to support customers in meeting local restrictions.

Taken together, our inbound voice, outbound (national and international) voice, number portability and Emergency Access services enable businesses to free themselves from the confines of legacy telco and cut their carrier cord with a full voice stack in the cloud. We're the first globe-spanning local cloud communications network to offer a single-source alternative to the PSTN.

Need help putting a sound communications strategy in place as you scale your business? Speak to one of [Voxbone's Comms Untanglers](#). We'll make the process strangely simple.