

HOW TO USE GOOGLE VOICE AS A MULTI-LINE PHONE SYSTEM

Overview

There are instances where on-the-fly call routing must be accomplished to have a hot-line functional 24/7. Google voice provides the ability to route calls to multiple numbers based (up to a total of 6 at any given time).

Traditional Approaches

Most offices have a phone system which handle things such as call routing and call forwarding. Unfortunately, traditional phone systems generally require a trained technician to make phone system changes. Newer phone systems allow key staff the possibility of configuring call routing and forwarding via a web-browser or a MS Windows-based piece of software. One drawback to a phone system is the capital investments required to purchase and maintain such phone systems.

Alternative Approaches

As this document will demonstrate, call routing for a hot-line can be accomplished using Google Voice thereby leveraging existing resources such as landlines and cell phones. In the alternative, and not covered in this document, individuals could also achieve some of this functionality through an outsourced Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phone system which by-passes the capital investment required for a traditional phone system. The drawback to this approach is the monthly recurring cost(s).

Google Voice Overview

Google Voice is a (currently) free service from Google. It provides you a phone number in an area code you select and then allows you to associate different phones with that number. When someone calls the Google Voice number, the phones you have associated with the Google Voice number ring based according to rules which you can set.

Pre-requisites

- A Google Voice Account (free with any Google account)
 - <https://accounts.google.com/SignUp>
- A list of numbers where you want calls routed (6 total max at a time)
- A protocol around who is notified of messages
- A protocol around who is responsible for returning messages

How-to

1. Log into your Google Voice Account
 - a. <http://google.com/voice>
2. Click on Settings
3. Go to the Phones tab
4. Enter the phone numbers who should receive hot-line calls
5. If you have time-based routing (i.e. each number is assigned a shift), click on Edit, Click on Advanced Settings, modify the settings under Ring Schedule
6. Click on the Voicemail & SMS Tab
7. Here, you can change the standard greetings and the recorded name (not covered in this document)
8. Go to the Voicemail notification section
9. Check both boxes so that test messages go to your cell phone and to an email address
10. Check the box under SMS forwarding so that you get copies of your text messages in email form
11. Check the box under Voicemail Transcripts so that your voicemail messages are transcribed
12. Go to Contacts in the left hand column
13. Create contacts which you want to have a special call handling (optional)
14. Next, create a group such as Helpline Volunteers and add the previously created contacts to this group (optional)
15. Run a test using your Google Voice number at various hours and with various phones to make sure things are working as expected
16. Enjoy low/no cost call routing!

If your caller lands into voicemail, Google Voice will attempt to transcribe the message and send the message to you as an email and, if you select, as an SMS message (cell phone text message). There is more information about Google Voice here: <http://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html> –

Other Tips:

Transfer the call (* key)

If for some reason a person whom answers the hot-line needs to transfer the call to another hot-line member, then when someone calls, all of your available phones will begin to ring, allowing you (or another person/hot-line member) to answer the phone. You can then transfer the call to another person by pressing the * (star) key.

Call Screening

Sometimes you may want to know who is calling from a particular number before answering. Well, there is a nifty feature named Call Screening that will allow you to listen into a call even while someone is leaving a message. This will allow you to determine how to handle the call: answer, send to voicemail, or record it.

To enable this feature, visit the Settings > Calls tab and ensure the 'On' box is selected under the Call Screening section. Optionally, you could have Google Voice ask unknown callers to say their name when calling your number. When you're done, click the Save button.