VONAGE

Communication is Key to Remote Work:

Empower Your Virtual
Employees and Unlock
Your Team's Potential

Emerging From an Uncertain World With Purpose

This is an unsettling and challenging time for us all. There is a global sense of uncertainty and fear about how and when to take our collective next step forward. Governing bodies, healthcare professionals, and business leaders around the world are locked in a continuously evolving debate over how the global health crisis will end and what we all should be doing to flatten the curve.

In spite of these challenges (or because of them?), we also find ourselves on the precipice of a most remarkable time in our world's history. To be sure, pandemics and outbreaks are commonly found in our history books. But never before have we faced the full force of Mother Nature's wrath with the knowledge, the technology, and the industrious innovation that we are equipped with today.

Business has continued in spite of the closure of physical offices around the world. Technology, powered by the cloud, has enabled businesses—from healthcare, education institutions, financial services, restaurants, and even fitness providers—to leverage cloud-based communications via video, messaging, voice, chat, and more, to keep serving patients, students, and customers, with little to no interruption.

During this unprecedented time, the ability to enable a completely virtual environment and maintain access to mission-critical business applications and connections from anywhere has become more important than ever. At Vonage, our own technology enabled all 2,400 of our employees across the globe to work productively in their homes, literally overnight. We are doing everything we can to maintain the health and well-being of our employees, while also ensuring we run our business effectively and help our customers do the same.

Throughout the pages of this eBook are diverse examples of how companies are moving forward to enable employees to seamlessly work from home. The examples represent a monumental shift in how we work in virtual offices today, and in the future. As we move forward in this new normal, we will find that preparedness, and a willingness to be agile and open to change, will enable successful businesses to weather this storm and any foul winds ahead. Let's continue to work together, leverage innovation, and use imagination coupled with technology to keep moving forward. After all, communication is key.

Alan Masarek
CEO, Vonage

For years, the debate about the merits of remote work has been raging. But now, it doesn't matter what you think—you're a remote worker.

So are your employees. Welcome to 2020 and the age of COVID-19. The pandemic slammed the door on businesses overnight, and that door will be slow to open. The new normal will take time to establish itself, and some companies are better positioned than others to withstand the process.

Businesses around the world were at various levels of preparedness for such an unexpected and sudden crisis. Nobody knew they would have to plan for the day when most of us couldn't leave our homes to get to work. And yet, some companies have handled the transition seamlessly, while others flounder.

At Vonage, we have over 2,000 employees around the globe. Some are remote, some are not. But when our CEO informed us that "starting Monday," the entire company would be working remote … well, none of us panicked.

We happen to be sitting on top of the world's most flexible cloud communications platform, so it was easy

for us. Chances are, your company wasn't quite so lucky.

That's OK. It's not too late, and it won't take long to get caught up.

But what does "caught up" look like in the age of COVID-19? When you're struggling with poor communication, mixed signals, lost revenue, and frustrated employees, it's tough to even see what you need, let alone find and implement it. We hope this guide will help you make sense of it all; by the end, you'll see the solutions are already built and ready for you!

So what does success look like during a global pandemic? You were running smoothly in January and February, then March hit like a wrecking ball, and you spent April trying to pick up the pieces. You're far from alone; workforce **research from Accenture** indicates that pre-pandemic, "less than one-third of all workers were able to make full use of their technology to effectively do their job. Now is the time," they argue, "to accelerate human+machine collaboration and support people as they transition to digital ways of working."

What if we told you continuity could be restored and productivity could soar? And what if we told you that the technology you would need to get there is built, packaged, and ready to go, right now?

What would that even look like?

Business Continuity

A turbulent economy, environmental changes, laws and regulations, the world around us, views on work/life balance, and evolving technology can all quickly impact business continuity. How we as leaders deal with these challenges goes a long way toward supporting business continuity. A company's ability to deal with contextual changes and threats to the organisation is essential, and that responsibility lands on leadership.

Organisations that create ongoing processes for dealing with change, rather than trying to deal with each issue as it arises, will enjoy competitive advantages over those that are not built to adapt to their dynamic surroundings.

There are lots of emergency situations that can interrupt continuity, but there's one big change we all seem to be dealing with at once: How do you handle a workforce that's suddenly remote?

To be successful, you want to be seamless, regardless of location—all you will need is a laptop and/or a cell phone, and a way for your staff to maintain their business contacts, phone numbers, and communication channels, wherever they are.

Remote Delivery of Services

From telehealth to education to legal firms to nonprofits to insurance companies—if you're in a service industry, business as usual will require the ability to deliver the most important and critical services remotely. Think telehealth doctor's visits or suddenly online classes.

So how do we get there, quickly and painlessly? Here are some of the challenges you'll undoubtedly face, and most importantly, some solutions.

Remote Working

Cloud-based communications can help employees easily access and share information with each other and with customers—no matter where, or how, or on what device they choose to work.

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Remote Workforce Challenges

Making the shift to remote work is difficult enough. But these are not usual times. The following challenges still apply, yet now they're joined by a viral pandemic, the sudden presence of children who are normally in school, and the uncertainty we're all experiencing.

The first thing you need is empathy. Have and show compassion for your employees, realising that as they navigate these waters for the first time, they are also dealing with a dozen other new stressors. Then make things as easy as possible for them by solving these common problems.

Productivity

This is kind of a trick, because productivity is actually not a problem among remote workers as a whole. It's near the top of the list of reasons managers and employers avoid remote work, but it's a mostly baseless fear. **Studies** actually show again and again that workers at home work more hours, not fewer.

So if you came here with that burning question, "How do I keep my employees productive if I can't see them?," we've got good news. The best thing you can do with your concerns of productivity is to let them go and trust the people you've hired to do the job, even without your constant oversight.

If you're still worried, fear not. Vonage products include deep analytics and performance management features, so you can keep an eye on your company's activities and optimise your workforce.

You may even find your workforce becomes more efficient at home than they were in the office. In **IWG's Global Workspace Survey**:

85%

of respondents said flexible working has made their business more productive.

67%

believe that flexibility can improve productivity by at least one fifth.

Burnout

The far more common problem with remote workers is burnout. When your home and your office are the same place, it can be hard to differentiate between the two. Remind your employees to "clock out" when it's time. Reassure them that you understand the difficulties they're facing and you want to be there for them.

Consider your workforce's mental health; over communicate your expectation that they'll care for themselves and disconnect from work at the end of the day. And listen. Ask for feedback and listen to concerns. The only way a company will weather this crisis is if leadership shows their humanity and takes deliberate care with employees' health and wellbeing.

Productivity may take a hit, at first, as people adjust to the shift. But in the longer run, you'll be pleasantly surprised at how much your workers can accomplish from home if given the proper tools and support. Give them those tools, then trust them to do the work.

Communication

The most important factor in a successful transition to remote work is communication—with your employees and with your customers. When we talk about customer communication, what we really mean is customer experience. The way you talk to your customers informs the experience they'll have with your company. The way you listen, even more so.

You probably sent out some form of communication to your employees and another to your customers to announce the changes your company is making to address COVID-19. Was it an email? A text message? A Facebook message? What if you had the ability to communicate with every customer on his or her chosen channel? Communications technology has grown up in recent years, and Vonage has been leading the way.
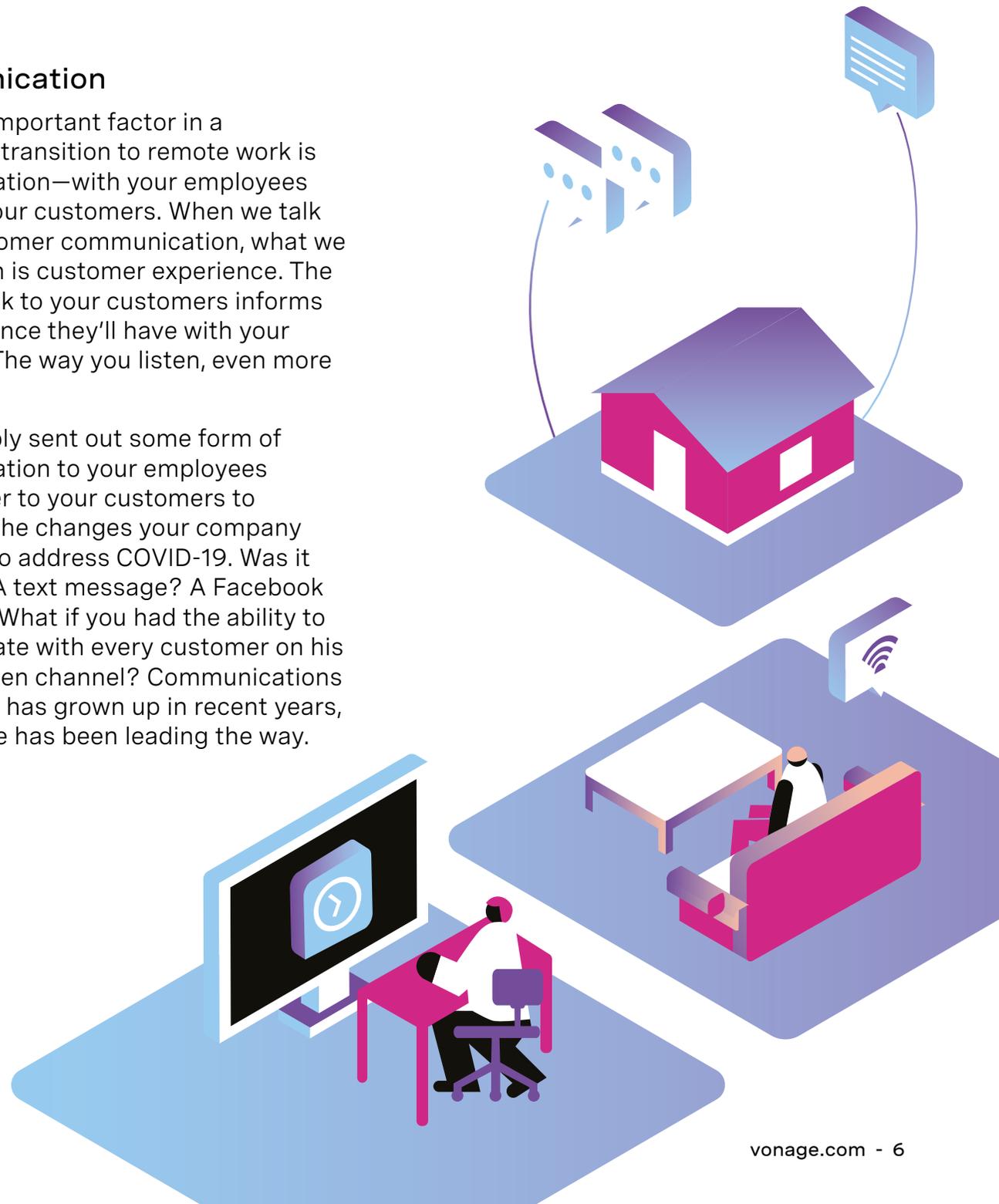
Technology

In a recent **Gartner** poll,

"**54% of HR leaders ...** indicated that poor technology and/or infrastructure for remote working is the biggest barrier to effective remote working in their organisation."

It's understandable, then, that many companies are panicking right now. But it's 2020, and technology should work for you, not vice versa.

"The first lesson learned from the coronavirus situation is to accelerate the development of a technology infrastructure that can support alternative types of working,"

Aaron McEwan
Vice President,
Research & Advisory, Gartner

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5 Essential Tools for Increasing Remote Productivity

1. Chat Apps
With a chat app, remote workers can have on-the-fly conversations similar to those they'd have in the office. But even better, because now these conversations contain GIFs.

2. Video Conferencing
By using video chat and web software, telecommuters can get as close as possible to the rest of the team without actually being in the same room.

3. Flexible Phone Services
It's essential for your business phone system to allow employees to integrate mobile apps to increase productivity and communications.

4. Screen-Sharing Apps
With a screen-sharing app, you can share a screen with as many co-workers as you need. And, if you're the boss, screen sharing lets you essentially do the equivalent of stopping by their desk.

5. Cloud-Based Project Management
When teams use a cloud-based project management solution, all members can see exactly what's going on and what they're responsible for in real time, no matter their location.

Contact Centre

Contact centres are being hit especially hard with this new reality, but the truth is that support agents' jobs are among the quickest and easiest to transition from on-premises to remote. Even if you've never considered such a move, there are products that just might make your distributed contact centre more productive and efficient than it was before.

Consider this an opportunity to upgrade, modernise, and scale your operations. Sure, it would have been nice to spend months planning and implementing new technology. But you don't have months, and we have experts and technology that don't need months. Let's get started right now.

Vonage offers **four contact centre plans**, so there's something for every business. The first feature you need to know about, on all plans: "Manage CX from anywhere." That's what you need right now, isn't it?

But it goes further than that. You need automatic call distribution, skills-based routing, CRM integration and more.

What if your contact center was in fact a product built from the ground up to integrate seamlessly with Salesforce? **Vonage Contact Center for Salesforce** is exactly that. Your agents will be automatically presented with

the Salesforce record about a caller the moment they make contact, by phone or by digital interaction. All of your communications happen and are recorded in the Salesforce environment.

Our fully functioning contact centre includes industry-leading features like:

- Conversation Analyzer (speech analytics)
- Dynamic routing from any Salesforce object
- Advanced reporting and analytics
- Global Voice Assurance and call plans
- Post-call surveys; supervisor monitoring
- PCI compliance for secure payments; and more

Together these features make up a powerful and comprehensive contact centre, and all of them work just as well remotely as they do in your physical office.

With all of this power at their fingertips, all your agents need is a laptop with internet connection and a headset or mobile phone. Every other aspect of their job lives in the cloud, and they can access it from anywhere.

Add to this our powerful AI integrations that allow the easy configuration of Virtual Receptionists that can effectively triage calls and route them to the correct agents (or even solve the problem themselves), and you have a world-class contact centre in your living room.

Contact Centre A:

Announces on Wednesday that beginning the following Monday, all employees should work from home. This sparks an office-wide scramble as people try to figure out what equipment they need to take home and how they're going to perform their duties away from the office. Meetings are held, IT is swamped with requests, support agents are trying to figure out how to direct calls from the on-premises contact centre to their own homes and how to access all the information they need to answer those calls effectively. And while Company A's employees are figuring all this out, their customers are being neglected.

Contact Centre B:

Announces on Wednesday that the following Monday, all employees should work from home. Employees react to this announcement with a strange calm. They know they can do their jobs from anywhere, because their entire communications system is in the cloud and accessible from anywhere you can connect to the internet. In fact, some already do. They'll miss coffee breaks and happy hours, but they won't worry about getting their jobs done. And their customers barely notice a change, because when they call or email, the person on the other end is calm, informed, and able to assuage their concerns immediately.

5 KPIs for Managing Cloud-Based Contact Centres

1. Availability
The environment must be available 24x7 and not suffer from any service interruptions.

2. Mean Opinion Score (MOS)
The average voice quality score. If the voice quality of conversations is poor, it won't matter that the automatic call distributor (ACD) is available.

3. Call Blocking Rate
The percentage of calls that do not reach your contact centre.

4. Vendor Capacity
The vendor's ability to handle all customer traffic more than projected peak volumes.

5. Provisioning Goal
The vendor's ability to respond.

RAM Tracking

RAM Tracking is a provider of GPS vehicle tracking systems for businesses in the UK and Canada. In recent years, they have experienced rapid growth. Salesforce brought their business processes together and offered RAM Tracking a wider understanding of their customers. However, their telephony system could not cope with the exponential growth. Vonage Contact Center bridged this gap and supported further requirements, such as better training.

With Vonage Contact Center's true cloud environment, RAM Tracking was able to transition all 80 employees from working at the office to their homes. Using home computers or new laptops sourced by the business, employees could continue using the Vonage solution remotely, as all they need is an internet connection. Inbound and outbound calls were effectively handled via a remote workforce, with only a minimal call time increase on inbound calls.

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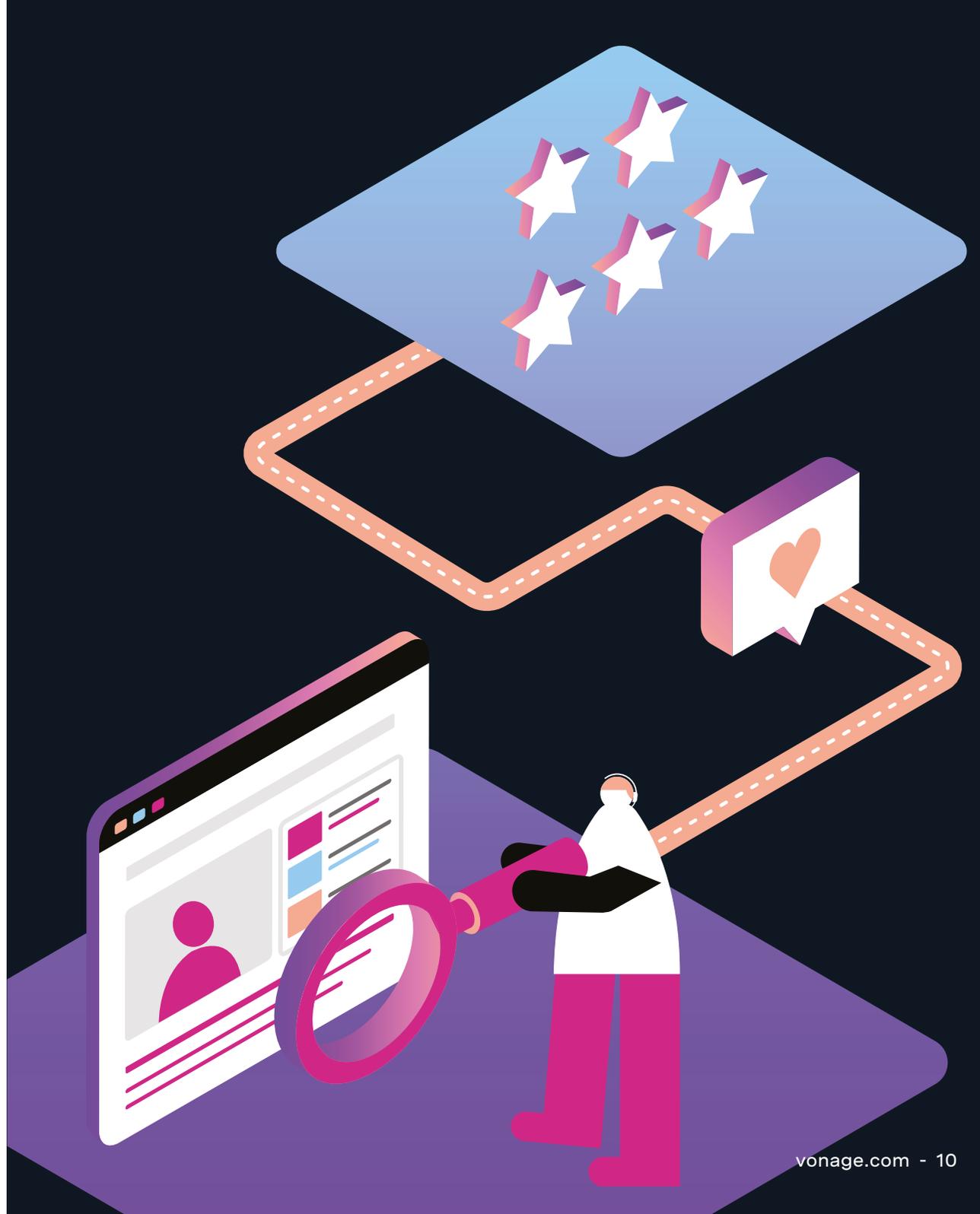
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Unified Communications

Vonage is unique here in that we offer a fully baked solution—all your communications on one platform. That platform is Vonage Business Communications (VBC).

Why "unified"? Nobody runs a company on a single app. Employees are bombarded with tools and applications from every direction. Some of these apps integrate with others, but again, we're talking about many integration pairings; who can keep it all straight?

73% of employees

waste at least one work hour per day toggling between apps.

Imagine the productivity increase if you can eliminate that hour by unifying your communications and integrating them with everything else you do. Begin with your Vonage Business Communications **Smart Number**, create custom apps with standard web technologies, and further customise voice and messaging workflows on top of your unified communications.

We're uniquely flexible in how you can access our capabilities. Take your pick of proven applications, all ready to go. Select from our extensive portfolio of APIs to create your own applications and integrations. Or get the best of both: Choose the apps you need and customise them with our APIs.

Using the power of communications APIs and a little imagination, any Smart Number can be programmed for customised voice and messaging workflows to suit your unique business requirements. By utilising standard web technologies with very little code, developers can program Smart Numbers to quickly deploy customisations on top of your Vonage unified communications functionality.

If this sounds complicated, don't worry. Our huge selection of integrations is easily accessible in the Vonage App Center, an ecosystem of deeply integrated business applications that improve productivity and create better communications experiences for employees and customers. The App Center makes it easy to find and integrate the tools you need, right when you need them.

"This crisis has forced employers to do, inside a week, what Fortune 500 companies typically take months or even years to roll-out across their global portfolios."

Dr. Anita Kamouri
Co-Founder of Iometrics

This is all good news for companies trying to make big changes overnight.

This may sound intimidating, but with programmable and unified communications, it's entirely doable.

These are unprecedented times, and companies who hesitate to adapt are left behind in a matter of days. Customers and employees need guidance, and you need to offer a solution to counter the disruption of "business as usual" that this current crisis has created. That's what makes fully packaged solutions like VBC so attractive. Vonage has done all the preparation for you, so you can get people back to work today.

Integrations

Vonage's world-class suite of communications capabilities is **fully integrated** with top cloud applications, including Salesforce, G Suite, Slack, Zapier, and more. Vonage solutions work together through embedded, UI-level integrations on a single pane of glass. Wherever your phone happens to be, the full power of your communications software goes with you.
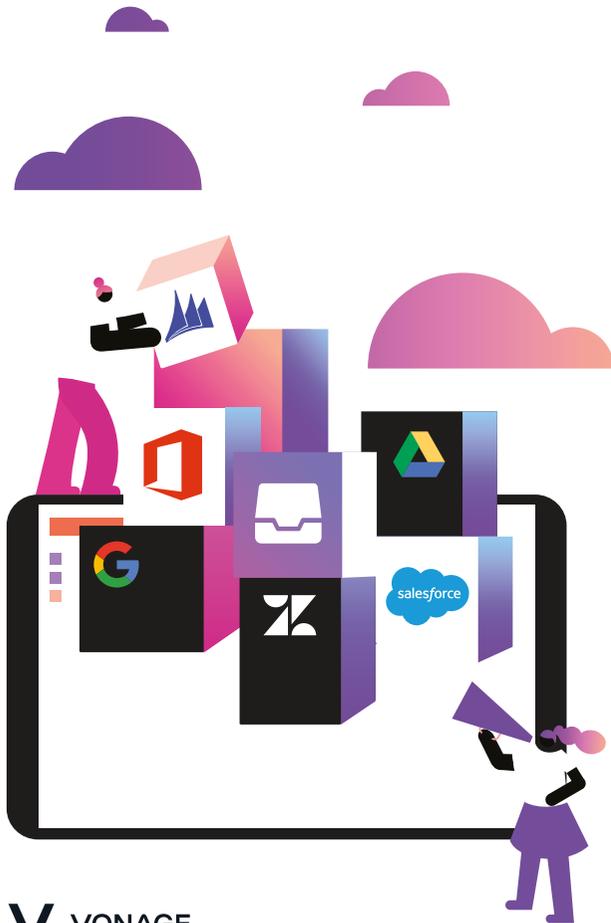
4 Challenges Unified Communications Can Help Solve

1. Organisational Silos

Unified communications solutions allow organisations to communicate as one entity; these tools take the "one business" mantra many companies cling to and turn it into an actionable, functional practice. When you're suddenly remote, integrating silos becomes more important than ever. Give your people the power to come together as one.

2. Human Latency

Although any number of unified communications benefits can help companies overcome their latency problems, presence tools—built-in tools that display a colleague's availability—can really help.

3. Shadow IT

By offering employees a suite of interconnected tools to mirror the unauthorised solutions they've been working with, companies get greater control.

4. Scaling Concerns

Companies with busy seasons and a high need for seasonal employees may need a way to coordinate and communicate with masses of employees at different times.

Company A:

Announces on Wednesday that beginning the following Monday, all employees should work from home. Everybody scrambles as they try to figure out how to do that. Assuming everyone has a company-issued laptop they can take home with them, what about security? What about accessing sensitive databases and attending meetings?

If Company A doesn't have a plan or an existing remote-work policy, if their data and computing all live on-premises, they're in for a rocky transition.

Company B:

Announces on Wednesday that beginning the following Monday, all employees should work from home. The announcement brings little concern. Employees speak to their managers about security and accountability, but they don't stress about their tools. Company B has already implemented cloud communications, and they're ready for anything, anywhere.

Things get more complicated if one of these companies is a school or a doctor's office. How do you see patients remotely? How do you teach classes from home? Again, teachers from School A will face many difficulties, but those from School B have a plan; they've been keeping their curriculum and assignments in the cloud for years and can access them from anywhere. Likewise in the case of a doctor's office. Dr. A wastes precious time researching and testing telehealth products, then introducing and training his staff to use them, while Dr. B is all set. Even if the staff hasn't met with patients remotely before, Dr. B knows that as a **Simple Practice** customer, for example, she has that capability at her fingertips and can activate it in minutes from wherever she is, on any device. Simple Practice has made that possible through Vonage's Unified Communications.

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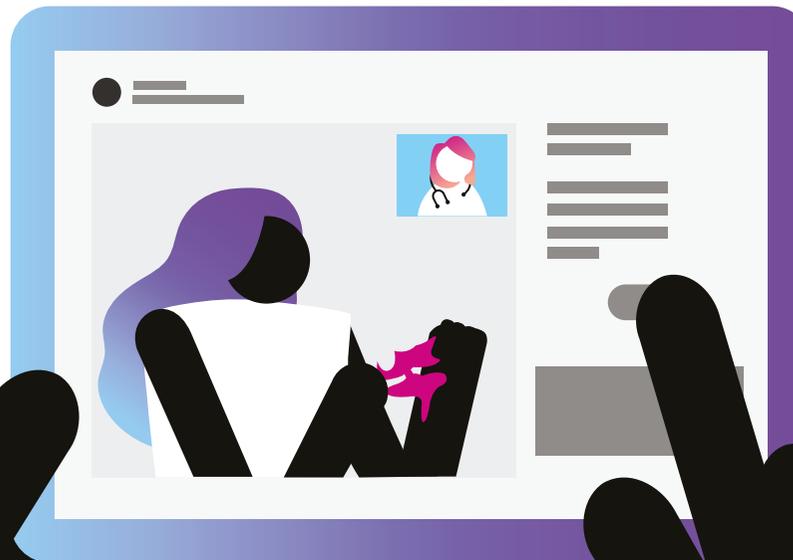
CUSTOMER SUCCESS:

Axio Financial

Since 2010, Axio Financial, a U.S. broker-dealer that specialises in selling structured financial products, has been leading the way in making the transition to the cloud, teaming with best-of-breed technology partners to help scale and innovate its business workflows and operations.

Vonage Business Communications allows Axio employees to work with their business phone extensions from wherever they happen to be. "You can answer a call, you can make a call from your extension if you're on the other side of the world," says Rick Baff, CIO, Axio. Chief among their concerns when shopping for a solution was a contact center natively integrated with Salesforce. "Our architecture allows my team to do more with less."

Axio saw a 500% year-over-year talk time uplift for 2018. Outbound dialling attempts increased by 30% in the same period.

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Looking to the Future

The truth is, we as a society have had the tools to get work done from anywhere for years. Business norms have been slower to change, and many of these tools have been ignored or underutilised by many industries. COVID-19 changed that, and this may be the way work gets done going forward. Some are calling this a massive work-from-home experiment, and we believe once the toothpaste is out of the tube, it'll stay out. Your employees have tasted remote work, and many of them won't want to give it up. Further, most of the top talent in the industry will have embraced this new way of working, and in order to attract and retain the best, you may be forced to offer remote work options even if you never thought you would.

The landscape is changing, like it or not. Agility, flexibility, and scalability are all key differentiating factors to employees. These are the keys to attracting top talent. This current pandemic only drives that home: Some employers were ready; many were not. The ones who were are the same companies generally known for workplace flexibility, remote work, and diverse, global workforces.

Changing a long-standing, rigid working culture at a company is the **top barrier to success** in this new world, and one of the top technology considerations in making the transition is communications. We can't help with the first (that's your job as a leader), but the second is our bread and butter. If you can remove the technological barriers, particularly in a moment of crisis like this one, chances are attitudes will follow along sooner rather than later.

Kate Lister, President of **Global Workplace Analytics**, has been studying remote work trends and providing workplace strategy advice to employers for more than a decade. She predicts this will be

"a tipping point for employee work-from-home programs," estimating *"25M to 30M U.S. employees will regularly work from home within the next two years (currently only 5M WFH half-time or more)."*
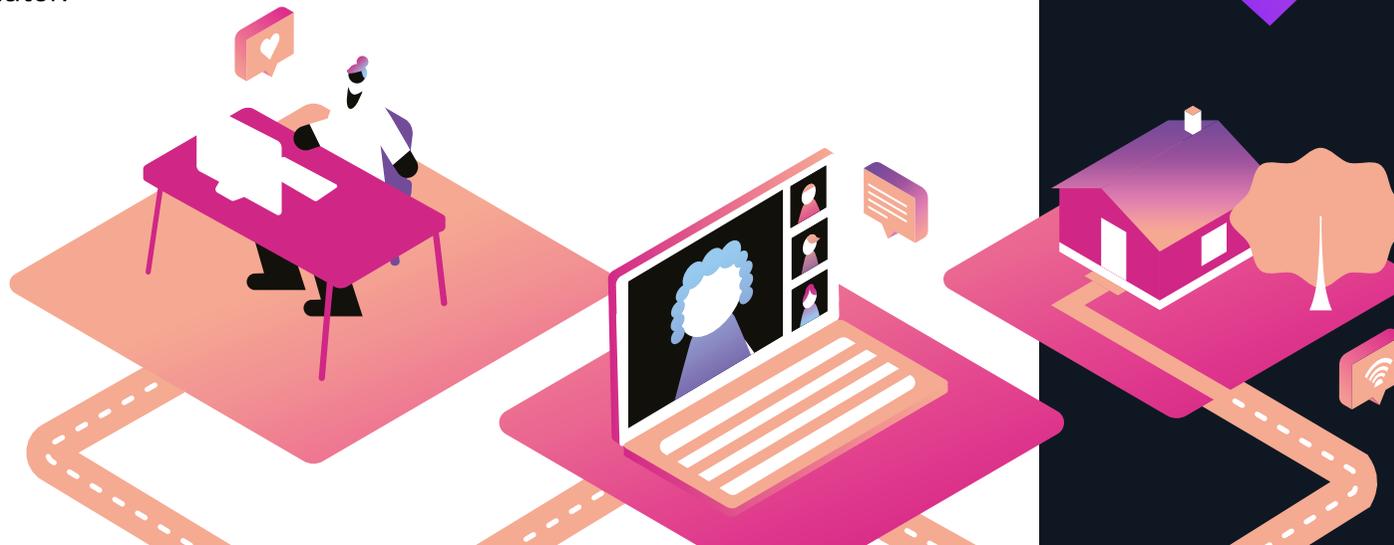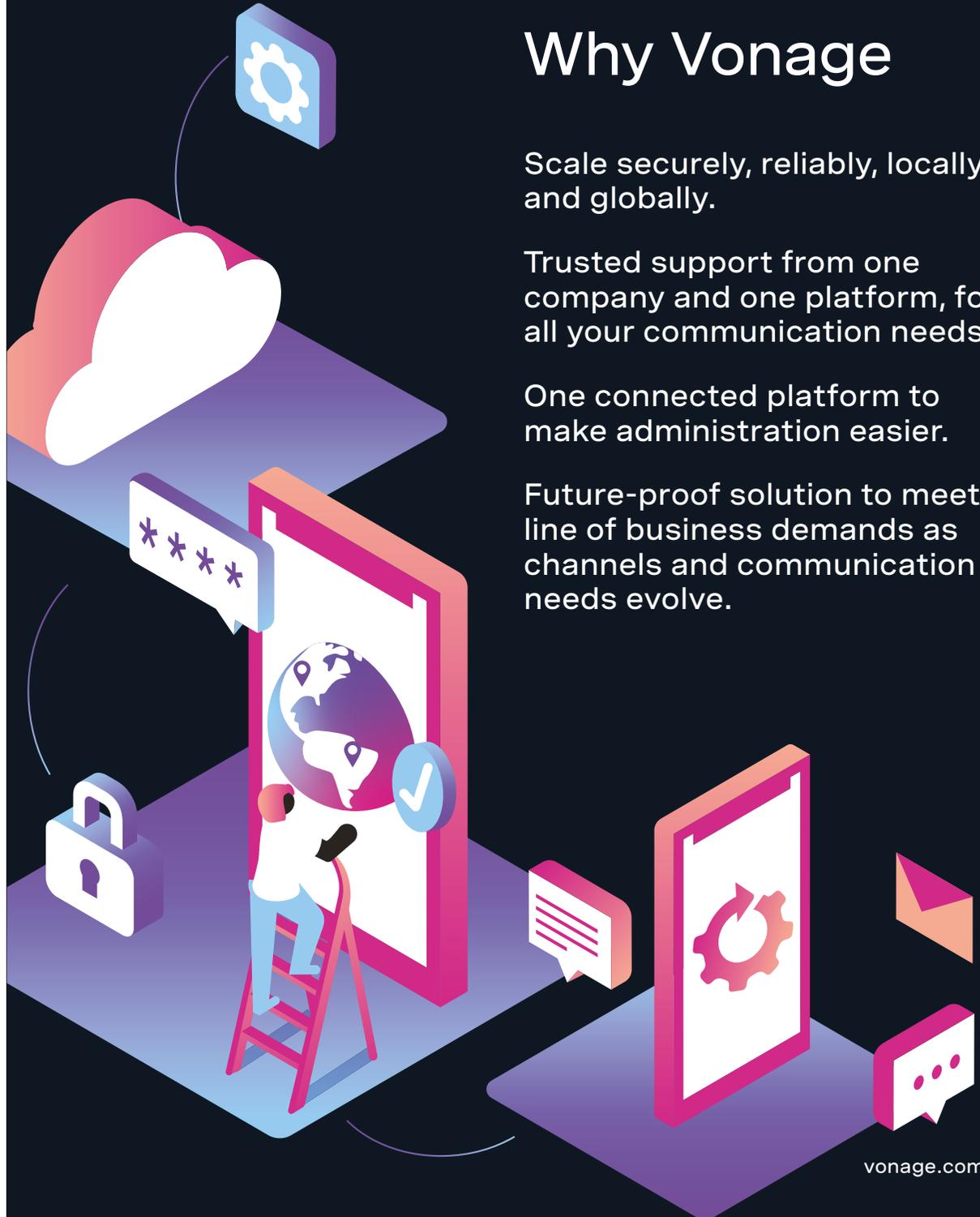
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Contact us and let one of our experts show you how to unlock the future of your business communications.

vonage.com

Vonage (Nasdaq:VG) is redefining business communications once again. We're making communications more flexible, intelligent, and personal, to help enterprises the world over, stay ahead. We provide unified communications, contact centres and programmable communications APIs, built on the world's most flexible cloud communications platform. True to our roots as a technology disruptor, our flexible approach helps us to better serve the growing collaboration, communications, and customer experience needs of companies, across all communications channels.

Why Vonage

Scale securely, reliably, locally, and globally.

Trusted support from one company and one platform, for all your communication needs.

One connected platform to make administration easier.

Future-proof solution to meet line of business demands as channels and communication needs evolve.