



**How Voice Link's Live
Answering Service Can Help
Your Business Turn Virtual**

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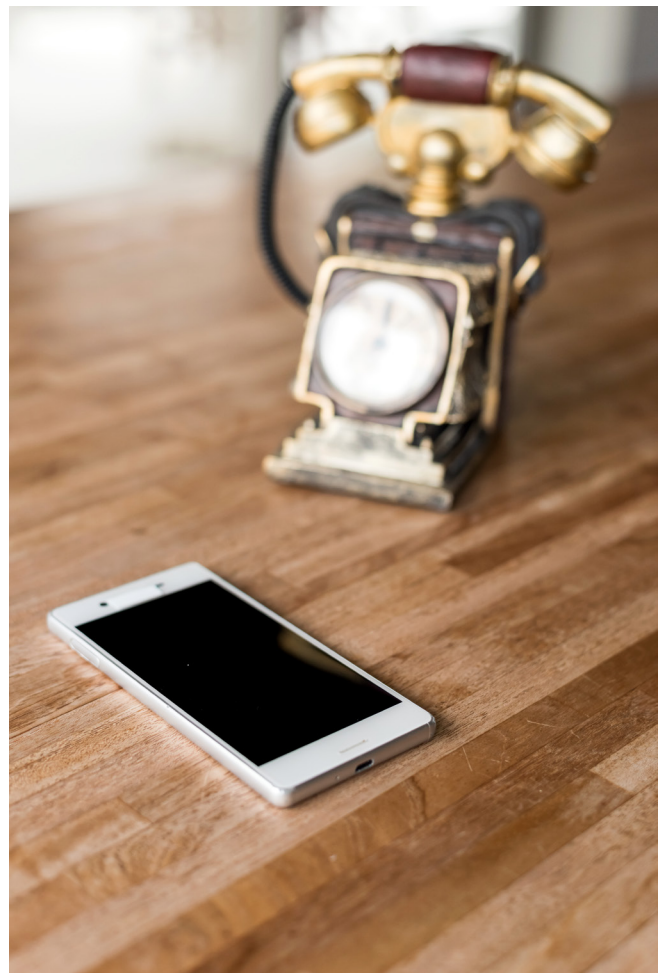
History of the Telephone for Business

Alexander Graham Bell was a scientist/inventor who was credited with the first functional telephone. The telephone came about because he was trying to improve the capabilities of the telegraph. Wealthy individuals and large corporations primarily used it as a means of communication between specific locations. Telephones made it easier for businesses to communicate with each other. It cut down on the amount of time it took to send messages to each other.

As the telephone network grew, it also expanded the area that a business could reach. Businesses began to use telephones to connect offices and to build a stronger network of customers. The telephone revolutionized the way that people communicated with each other and businesses benefited from the advancements in communication.

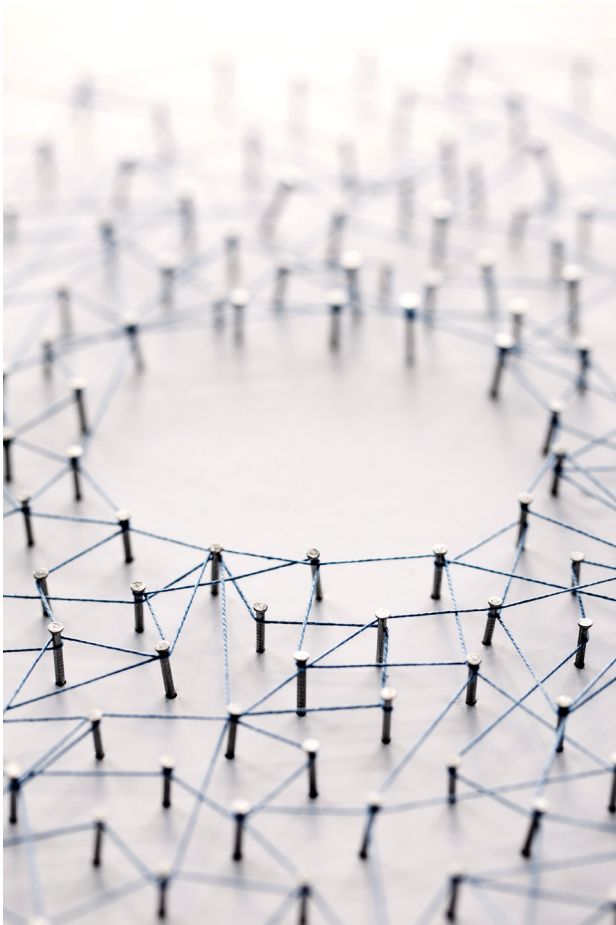
Business communication has further evolved with the use of the Internet as a means of communication. The email made it easier to connect with clients in written format instantly. The further advancement of cell phones with smartphones makes it easy to reach employees and customers wherever they are.

The evolution of communication and the increased ease for both individuals and businesses has helped to make a global economy possible. Without the ability to communicate with each other instantly, it would be much more difficult to conduct business with countries on the other side of the world.



What is an Answering Service?

As telephone use began to grow in the late 1870s, the telephone exchange was developed to handle the increase in calls from an exciting society eager to use these technological marvels. The early systems relied on a switchboard between callers, using operators to manually patch calls. The first-ever commercial switchboard, made with carriage bolts (handles from teapot lids) and bustle wire, debuted in New Haven, Connecticut in January 1878.



The telephone operator was a mainstay in telephone operations for the next century, as the need for call switching transformed as technology improved to become a “call assistant,” functioning as a real-time directory with phone numbers and business information for those that pressed “0” to reach the operator.

Soon those operators began serving as an office receptionist and answering service for companies who inserted themselves into the process by taking messages for their clients. Early adopters of this service were time-critical professionals like doctors and plumbers who needed to know how many centimeters Mrs. Smith was dilated or how many feet of water was in Mr. Jones’ basement.

Skipping ahead to the 21st century, telecommunications with speed-of-light connections provided by satellites and fiber-optic networks means digital-quality audio (and video) and instant messaging, call routing, and information the modern caller demands. Yet, the needs of doctors, service providers, lawyers, and other industries remain the same - high-quality and efficient communications to and from their customers.

Features of a Virtual Answering Service

The basics of an answering service provide the caller with timely service in a pleasant yet professional tone. And those early doctors and plumbers have now grown to millions of small businesses where offering virtual customer service either as a means to cut costs of a live receptionist on-site or for greater efficiency utilizes professional call centers rather than in-house staff.

Answering service companies range from the simple to the complex, and offer a range of services that can help small businesses manage calls, emails, social media, and live webchat. A virtual answering service is a cloud-based or online service in which calls directed to a business number are picked up by an automated response or third-party operative to take messages, forward calls on, or otherwise handle telephone communications.

Live answering services are relatively flexible and can be tailored to a business's specific needs. In some cases, these needs are simple and straightforward, even to the point of being automated. In other cases, a dedicated agent might be required to carry out a guided conversation with callers.



Most call center and answering services offer multiple services fielding inbound calls, including simple, automated options like the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) tree, which gives callers a menu of options to choose from to automatically direct their call. On the complex end of the spectrum, answering services can assign human agents to manage calls, becoming intimately familiar with the business they answer for, and even selling or lead-generating on behalf of the company in some cases. Some even offer outbound calls to help drive sales and generate new leads.

Features of a Virtual Answering Service

Here's a look at some common services provided by a virtual answering service:



Interactive voice response

An IVR tree is a common call routing tool that makes sure the call is delivered to the right contact without human intervention. These systems are usually the cheapest to implement and maintain because they don't require an agent to answer the phone on behalf of the company. They simply ensure calls are delivered to the right person who works for the business.



Message taking

One of the most common services provided by an answering service is message taking. An agent answers a call and captures the caller's name, contact information, the reason for calling, and any other essential information the business requires. That information is forwarded to someone who can return the call when convenient.



Call forwarding

When a message might not be enough to address the caller's needs, some answering services offer call forwarding. This service allows an agent to ascertain a caller's needs and then direct the call to the right person who works for the business.



Appointment scheduling

For businesses that rely on appointment scheduling for meeting with clients, many answering services can access preferred calendar tools like Outlook and set appointments during available business hours.

Features of a Virtual Answering Service

Virtual answering common services continued:



After hours or overflow answering

If the company has its phone lines under control but needs assistance during peak hours or after the business has closed for the day, a virtual answering service can be hired for those specific purposes.



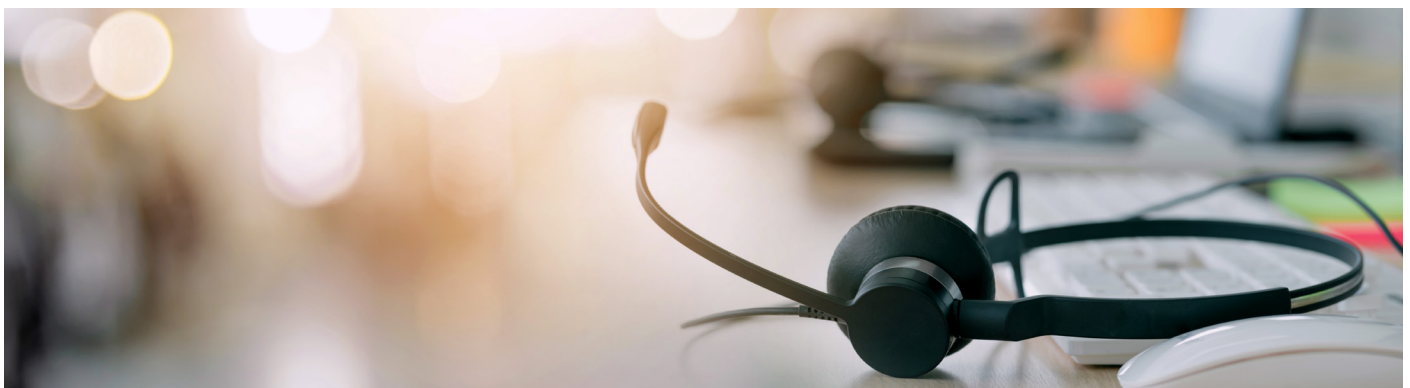
Order management

If running an e-commerce store, an answering service agent can assist callers who need help in placing their orders. Agents walk through the purchase with the caller to make sure their order is properly received. Some answering services offer upselling and cross-selling services as well.



Customer service

On the more advanced end of the spectrum is full customer service outsourcing. This answering service typically requires dedicated or semi-dedicated agents because it requires familiarity with the business and industry. Customer service agents can perform the same tasks expected of an in-house customer service agent, from answering questions to fielding complaints.



Benefits of a Virtual Answering Service

As of 2017, there were 455 million telephone numbers for the United States' 325 million residents or 1.4 per person. About three-quarters of those numbers were tied to mobile phones, a little over 10 percent were for old-fashioned landlines, and the rest were for internet-enabled phones.

The ease-of-use of cell phones now demands a fast and efficient exchange of information. In the business world, the increased demands of customers to receive such information has increased the need for telephone systems that are just as immediate and nimble as the technology used to connect them. In other words, mobile phone users are demanding of their time spent on the phone and expect the company on the other end to be ready for their call.

Benefit 1: Cost

The annual median wage of a receptionist is \$28,430. Factor in insurance, overtime, workman's compensation, and other benefits, and the cost skyrockets. Sick days and absenteeism (which are MUCH more likely in an office setting) accounted for \$8.1 billion of annual productivity in the U.S. in 2019.



Benefit 2: Customer Service

A good staff is hard to find. Dedicating an in-house receptionist is great in the office but takes away from critical administrative, operational, and financial needs to keep the business running smoothly. Multi-tasking receptionists tend to miss calls and interfere with the natural flow of office functionality.

Virtual receptionists can know your business inside and yet be on-call during office hours or 24 hours a day.

The #1 customer service killer is long hold times. Studies show 58% of callers reported frustration at being placed on hold. And 67% of customers would rather hang up than go to voicemail or an automated phone tree. With a live answering service, calls are guaranteed to be answered quickly.

Benefits of a Virtual Answering Service

Benefit 3: Availability

Most in-house receptionists are in the office during business hours only. That's only a third of the day. What about after hours or weekends? Bad weather or technology run amok can stifle incoming and outgoing calls. In today's demanding customer service environment, that is a lot of downtime for prospects and clients to become frustrated or move to a rival.

Virtual receptionists are ready for calls day or night, during business hours or after, during holidays. They can capture every single call or potential lead. Using distributed workflow, virtual receptionists are available 24-hours if needed despite bad weather, time zones, or technology breakdowns.



Benefit 4: Convenience/Efficiency

As noted above, even dedicated in-house receptionists need to multitask. That's a demanding role that is difficult for even the most dedicated office professionals. Coupled with internal communication breakdowns, vacation, meetings, and working outside the office, finding and alerting colleagues of important messages is inefficient at best.

A Live Virtual Receptionist has the Cloud at their disposal. They can be appointment-setters, lead-capturers, and call-handlers all at once. Calls transferred instantly to cell phones and messages are sent to the inbox or smartphone voicemail efficiently. Get instant updates anytime, anywhere with text and instant messaging.

Benefits of Using Voice Link's Live Answering Services

From Alexander Graham Bell to today's state-of-the-art virtual receptionist experience, using the telephone to conduct business has a few truths: timeliness, courtesy, information, and efficiency are the basis for any customer service call. Customers want a live voice; compassionate helpers that work with their clients to develop winning communication strategies. Business owners want to know their calls are being answered promptly, with the correct information disseminated and dispatched to the proper place quickly and efficiently.



Beyond the answering service basics, many businesses must deal with external demands on their operations that require strict adherence to rules and regulations set forth from each business.

For example, doctors and other medical professionals have HIPAA regulations to adhere to in their communications with family members, hospitals, and others that may need of critical healthcare information. Colleges and universities must abide by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act when talking to prospective or current students about financial aid or admissions. These are just two examples of why high-trained and professional virtual receptions go beyond just answering the phones.

Voice Link of Columbus began in 1989 with only four employees and originally focused on just providing live answering services for healthcare facilities. In 1991, they expanded their services to assist other industries, including plumbing companies and law offices.

Over the next two decades, with evolving technology including the introduction of voice mail and cell phones, Voice Link has evolved its services to meet the demands of businesses of all sizes.

Phone Answering is Our Core Business

Answering the phone is a vital part of any business. Poor telephone operations can cost losing customers or poor reputation. Phone answering is Voice Link's core business. Our professional receptionists take care of your customers. We can improve your customer experience and customer loyalty because your caller will always be speaking to a virtual receptionist - available to them during office hours or 24 hours a day to take care of their needs.

The benefits of using Voice Link as your virtual receptionist include:

- Being Available To Your Customers
- Listening To Your Customers
- Offering Clear And Accurate Information
- Resolving Issues Timely And Professionally
- Providing Good Customer Service



Let Voice Link help you with those incoming calls when you are not available. You will be ahead of your competition with a live answering service and provide customer support 24 hours a day.

Live Phone Call Answering Improves Customer Service

Customers today are looking for a business that provides great customer service. When a caller is calling a business, they are looking to get a quick answer. When they reach a voicemail, they hang up and go on to the next business. Can you afford to miss these opportunities?



Operating 24/7, our virtual receptionist services offer:

- Disaster Recovery & Contingency Plans
- Overflow Answering During Peak Times
- Document Call History
- Improve Response Times For Support
- Cost Reduction For Support Services
- Trained Personnel And State-Of-The-Art Technology
- Scalability To Grow With Your Business
- Fully Customizable Scripting & Reporting

Voice Link's web-enabled customer service call center services are ideal for technical support, help desk, lead generation or customer inquiry. Give your customers immediate access to talk to someone in real-time – so they can receive the live help and support that they need.

We Are The Order Entry Call Center

If your business takes orders over the phone, Voice Link can become an extension of your company by customizing scripts and interacting with your website & CRM. We are committed to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Order entry services are ideal for:

- Booking Events and Seminars
- Customer Care
- Appointments & Reservations
- eCommerce & Catalog Orders



Our commitment is to provide our clients with state-of-the-art technology solutions fronted by capable, courteous, and service-oriented call center professionals.

Security Is Our Priority

Keeping your data safe and eliminating outside access to personally-identifying information is more important than ever. Every business needs to maintain privacy for its clients' and consumers' personal data. Voice Link's Secure Messaging including encrypted messages will add additional layers of security and our Mobile App helps ensure that your data remains confidential, while being able to receive and respond to important and/or time-sensitive messages.



Our secure messaging app uses end-to-end message encryption. This means when you send a message through the secure messaging app, the data is encrypted in transit.

Key benefits of our mobile app include:

- Private Communications
- Messages are sent and received for fast, collaborative communications.
- Consolidate devices and eliminate pagers! Use our App to send unlimited messages. You can receive your messages via email or SMS.
- Immediately sends messages - eliminating delays.
- Easy-to-use App gives you advanced communications for your smartphones and tablets.
- The app is available as either a cloud-based or on-site solution.

Your Virtual Receptionist Future With Voice Link

The telephone has probably done more for the advancement of society than any other device. In a little more than 100 years, we've gone from a single telephone wire in Bell's laboratory to a global telecommunications monolith capable of delivering millions of calls and messages at the speed of light.

For businesses that want their telephone systems to be a strength rather than a weak link in their operations, providing efficient phone service and customer care is an investment that retains customers and also brings in new customers who are seeking a better experience than they've had elsewhere.

Consistent, professional customer service is how the most successful businesses differentiate themselves from their competition. The virtual receptionists at Voice Link of Columbus, Inc. have earned an 82% referral rate, thanks to customized communication solutions, secure messaging, and appointment scheduling services that save our clients time and money while increasing customer loyalty.



Voice Link of Columbus, Inc. offers month-to-month service agreements to meet your unique needs, with no hidden fees. Our professional virtual receptionists along with our excellent reputation and state-of-the-art technology will exceed your expectations. Request information online or call us at (706) 391-4623 for a free consultation.

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