BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Business Phone Systems & VoIP

Phone menus, texting, keeping your number and 911 — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for small local businesses

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For RingCentral, Ooma Office & Google Voice · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to business phone service over the internet, often called VoIP. It's written for small local businesses — a shop, an office of two or three people, a contractor with a truck and a cell phone — and for the family members who help them. It covers three popular services: RingCentral, Ooma Office and Google Voice. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Phone companies change their prices and screens from time to time, so wherever a number matters, this guide tells you where to double-check it.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What an internet phone system is, what changes when you switch, and what you need before you sign up for anything.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you run a small business, your phone number may be the most valuable thing you own that you never think about. It's on your truck, your business cards, your website and in your customers' contacts. When it rings, that's work. When it doesn't, that's worry.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain a business phone system sitting across the desk from you: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything. When a word like "porting" or "auto-attendant" comes up, I'll stop and explain it right then.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain what an internet phone system (VoIP) is, and what's different from the old phone line.
- Compare three popular services — RingCentral, Ooma Office and Google Voice — with honest prices.
- Walk you through keeping your existing number when you switch, without losing a single call.
- Set up a phone menu ("Press 1 for..."), business hours, holiday hours and voicemail.
- Put your business line on your cell phone, so you don't have to give out your personal number.
- Explain business texting, and the registration that keeps your texts from being blocked.
- Cover 911, power outages, recording calls, and the scams aimed at business phone numbers.

The big promise: you can't break it

You can't hurt anything by looking around your phone system's settings. A phone menu that says the wrong thing, a greeting you don't like, or calls ringing the wrong person can all be changed in a few minutes. The only things that call for real care are moving your number from one company to another, canceling an old service, and your 911 address. I'll mark those clearly every time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

A good business phone setup means customers reach a real greeting instead of a busy signal, calls after hours go to voicemail that lands in your email, and you can answer the business line from anywhere — the shop, the job site, or the kitchen table — without giving out your personal cell number.

GOOD TO KNOW

A word about legal and money questions

I'm a technology helper, not a lawyer or accountant. Where rules come up — recording calls, texting customers, contracts — I'll explain them in general terms and suggest when to ask a professional.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything in this guide leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question, especially when it's the number your customers call.

So let's start with the simplest question: what *is* VoIP?

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What VoIP Is (and What Changes When You Switch)

VoIP (say it "voyp") stands for **Voice over Internet Protocol**. That's a fancy way of saying your phone calls travel over the internet instead of over the old copper phone wires. To the person calling you, nothing seems different. They dial your number, and you answer.

The old way and the new way

	Traditional business line	Internet phone system (VoIP)
How calls travel	Copper wires from the phone company	Your internet connection
Where you answer	The desk phone plugged into the wall	Desk phone, cell phone app or computer
Phone menu ("Press 1...")	Extra equipment, often costly	Usually included, set up on a website
Adding a line	Technician visit, new wiring	Add a user online, often same day
During a power outage	Often kept working	Stops unless you plan for it (Chapter 23)
911 location	Tied to the wire's address	You must register and update it (Chapter 22)

Words you'll hear

Word	What it means
Provider	The company you pay for phone service: RingCentral, Ooma, Google and many others.
User or seat	One person on the system. Most providers charge per user, per month.
Extension	A short number (like 101) that reaches one person, phone or menu inside your system.
Auto-attendant	The recorded greeting with a menu: "Press 1 for the shop, 2 for billing." Ooma calls it a **Virtual Receptionist**; RingCentral calls it an **Auto-Receptionist** or **IVR menu**.
Ring group	Several phones that ring together, or one after another, for the same call.
Porting	Moving your existing phone number from one company to another. You keep the number.
Softphone	An app that turns your cell phone or computer into a business phone.
E911	"Enhanced 911": sending your address to the 911 center with the call.
10DLC	The registration system for business texting from regular 10-digit numbers (Chapter 20).

GOOD TO KNOW

Wi-Fi Calling on your cell phone isn't the same thing

Your cell phone's Wi-Fi Calling setting lets your *personal* cell number work over Wi-Fi. A business VoIP service gives you a separate *business* number, a phone menu and other office features. You can use both.

What stays the same

- Your phone number, if you move it the right way (Part 3 of this guide).
- Your customers dial you exactly the way they always have.
- Your old desk phones may or may not work — Chapter 16 explains how to tell.

What changes

- You manage everything on a website (often called the **admin portal**) or in an app, not by calling the phone company.
- Your phone service is only as good as your internet. A shaky connection means choppy calls.
- You're responsible for keeping your **911 address** correct.

- Without power or internet, calls stop unless you have a backup plan.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

For most small businesses, VoIP costs less than a traditional business line with the same features, and it lets the business number follow you. You can be at a job site and still answer the shop phone on your cell, with the customer seeing your business number, not your personal one.

CHAPTER 3

What You'll Need Before You Start

A little preparation saves a lot of headaches. Before you sign up for any service, gather these things. It's a good afternoon project with a family member.

1. A steady internet connection

Each phone call uses only a small amount of internet, but it needs a **steady** connection more than a fast one. If your video calls freeze or your card reader drops out, sort that out first. A wired connection to the router is steadier than Wi-Fi for a desk phone.

> **TIP**
>
> **A quick check**
>
> Make a test call from a free app (or a video call) at your busiest time of day. If voices cut out, ask your internet provider or a helper to look at the router before you move your business number.

2. Your current phone bill

If you plan to keep your number, you'll need a **recent bill** from your current phone company. It has the details the new company asks for: the exact name on the account, the account number, and the service address. Some providers ask you to upload a copy of a bill from the last month or so; RingCentral, for example, wants one no more than 45 days old.

3. A list of who should ring where

Sketch it on paper first. Who answers during the day? Who should get calls when you're busy? What should happen at night, on weekends and on holidays? You'll use this list in Part 4.

Question	Your answer
Business hours	Example: Mon–Fri 8 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 9 a.m.–noon
Who answers first	Example: the front counter phone
If no one answers	Example: ring Bill's cell, then go to voicemail
After hours	Example: greeting with hours, then voicemail
Menu choices	Example: 1 = service, 2 = billing, 0 = anyone

4. Your business details

- Your business's legal name and physical address (not a P.O. box) — for your account and for 911.
- Your **EIN** (the federal Employer Identification Number), if you have one. Business texting registration usually asks for it (Chapter 20).
- A working website address, if you have one. Some providers ask for it before turning on texting.
- An email address you check, for voicemail messages and account notices.

5. One person in charge of the account

Decide who will be the **administrator** — the person who signs in to change settings. It's fine if that's a son, daughter or office manager, but the account should be in the business's name, and you should know how to get in, too.

> **HEADS UP**
>
> **Don't cancel anything yet**
>
> Whatever you do, **don't cancel your current phone service** before your number has been moved. Canceling first can cause you to lose the number for good. Chapter 8 explains why.

PART 2

Choosing a Service

Three popular services for small businesses, what they cost as of November 2026, and the questions to ask before you sign.

CHAPTER 4

RingCentral (RingEX) at a Glance

RingCentral is one of the largest business phone companies. Its phone service is called **RingEX** (you may still see the older name, RingCentral MVP). It suits businesses that want a full-featured phone system with phone menus, desk phones, texting and video meetings in one app.

The plans and prices

Plan	Billed yearly	Billed monthly	Good for
Core	$20 per user/month	$30 per user/month	Most small offices: calls, menu, texting
Advanced	$25 per user/month	$35 per user/month	Adds things like more texting and connections to other business software
Ultra	Ask for a quote	Ask for a quote	Larger or busier offices; RingCentral may price it by quote

Core and Advanced prices are list prices as of November 2026, before taxes and regulatory fees, which add to every phone bill. Some 2026 listings show Ultra at $35 yearly or $45 monthly, while others say it's now sold by quote only, so ask. RingCentral sometimes offers discounts for more users or promotions, so look at the price on your own quote.

What you get

- Unlimited calling within the U.S. and Canada.
- A local or toll-free business number, and the ability to bring your existing number.
- An **Auto-Receptionist** with phone menus (IVR), business hours and closed hours.
- The **RingCentral app** on your cell phone and computer, for calls, texts and video meetings.
- Business texting, with a monthly allowance per user that's shared across the account. Texting requires registration first (Chapter 20).
- An optional **AI Receptionist** add-on that answers calls with a computer voice. Weigh it carefully for an older customer base, who may prefer a person or a simple menu.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Unlimited" has limits

Unlimited calling means the U.S. and Canada only. Calls to other countries cost extra. Texting comes with a set number of messages per user per month, not unlimited. Ask about both before you sign.

Who it suits

RingCentral fits an office that wants everything — menus, desk phones, texting, faxing and video — from one company, and doesn't mind a few more settings to learn. Its admin website has many options. That's power, but it also means more to set up the first time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One app on your phone and computer handles calls, texts and video meetings from your business number, so you can leave the shop and still be "at the front desk."

CHAPTER 5

Ooma Office at a Glance

Ooma Office is a business phone service from Ooma, a company many people know for its home phone boxes. It's known for being simple to set up, and it's billed month to month with no long contract.

The plans and prices

Plan	Price (U.S.)	What it adds
Essentials	$19.95 per user/month	A business number, the Virtual Receptionist (phone menu), unlimited calling in the U.S. and Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico, the mobile app
Pro	$24.95 per user/month	Adds business texting (250 texts a month) and video meetings, among other features
Pro Plus	$29.95 per user/month	Adds more texting (1,000 texts a month) and connections to other business software

Prices are U.S. list prices as of November 2026, before taxes and fees. Extra phone numbers cost extra each month, and Ooma may charge a one-time activation fee, so ask for the full first-month total before you sign up. Canadian prices differ.

What you get

- The **Virtual Receptionist**: a greeting and phone menu with up to 10 numbered choices, and separate business-hours and after-hours menus.
- The **Ooma Office app** for your cell phone. The desktop app for your computer comes with the Pro plans.
- **Virtual Fax**, which lets you send and receive faxes as PDF files (Chapter 18).
- Optional Ooma equipment, such as a base station and wireless desk phones.
- An admin website at **office.ooma.com**, where you change settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

Texting needs the Pro plan and a registration

On Essentials, there's no business texting. On Pro and Pro Plus, Ooma turns texting on only after you complete a business registration form, which asks for your EIN, address and a working website. Chapter 20 explains why.

Who it suits

Ooma Office fits a small shop or office that wants a dependable phone menu, voicemail and an app, with fewer settings to learn. The month-to-month billing also makes it easier to try.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You get a professional greeting and menu for your callers on the most basic plan, so a one-person business can sound organized without paying for features it won't use.

CHAPTER 6

Google Voice for Business at a Glance

Google Voice for business is Google's phone service. It's built to work alongside **Google Workspace** — Google's business email, calendar and documents. If your business email already runs through Google Workspace, Google Voice is easy to add.

HEADS UP

Not the same as the free Google Voice

Many people have a free personal Google Voice number on a Gmail account. That personal version isn't meant for running a business, and a number on a personal Gmail account can't be moved into a business Google Voice account. This chapter is about the paid business version.

The plans and prices

Plan	Price	Key points
Starter	$10 per user/month	Up to 10 users. Calls, voicemail and texting. **No** phone menu (auto-attendant) and no ring groups.
Standard	$20 per user/month	Adds auto-attendants (phone menus) and ring groups. No user limit.
Premier	$30 per user/month	Everything in Standard, plus extras such as international calling for larger teams.

These are Google's list prices as of November 2026, and they are **on top of** your Google Workspace subscription in most cases. Google has also introduced standalone Starter and Standard plans for people who don't have Workspace; check Google's Voice pricing page for which one fits you.

What you get

- A U.S. business number, or the number you bring from another company.
- Calls and voicemail on the Google Voice app for phones, and in a web browser on a computer.
- Voicemail **transcripts** — written versions of your messages — in the app and in your email.
- Texting in the U.S. only, meant for one-to-one conversations rather than mass messages (Chapter 19).

- Phone menus and ring groups on Standard and Premier.

GOOD TO KNOW

Pick Standard if you want a phone menu

The single biggest surprise with Google Voice is that the $10 Starter plan has **no** phone menu and no ring groups. If you want "Press 1 for...", or several phones ringing together, you need Standard or Premier.

Who it suits

Google Voice fits a business that already lives in Google — Gmail on your own business email address, Google Calendar, Google Drive — and wants a simple, low-cost phone service managed in the same place.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your voicemails arrive as written messages in your email, so you can skim them between jobs without calling in to listen.

CHAPTER 7

Comparing the Three, and Questions to Ask

All three services do the basics well: a business number, calls on your cell phone, voicemail and a website to manage it. Here's how they line up for a typical small business.

	RingCentral (Core)	Ooma Office (Essentials)	Google Voice (Standard)
Price per user	$20 yearly / $30 monthly	$19.95 monthly	$20, plus Google Workspace
Phone menu	Yes	Yes	Yes (not on Starter)
Business texting	Yes, after registration	Pro plan and up, after registration	Yes, U.S. only, not for bulk
Fax	Available	Virtual Fax	Not part of Google Voice
Desk phones	Many supported models	Ooma phones and supported models	Supported models list
Contract	Yearly price is lower	Month to month	Monthly

Prices are list prices as of November 2026, before taxes and fees.

GOOD TO KNOW

There are others, too

Many other companies sell business VoIP, including the phone and cable companies you may already use. The questions below work for any of them.

Questions to ask before you sign

1. What will my **first bill** be, all in, with taxes, fees and any activation charge?
2. Is there a **contract**? What happens if I cancel early?
3. Can I **keep my current number**? Is there a charge to move it in — or out later?
4. Does the plan include a **phone menu**, business hours and holiday hours?
5. Does it include **texting**? How many texts a month? Who handles the registration?
6. Will my **existing desk phones** work, or do I need new ones? What do new ones cost?
7. How do I set and update my **911 address**?
8. What happens to calls if the **internet or power goes out**? Can calls forward to my cell?
9. How do I reach **support**, and what hours?

TIP

Write the answers down

Ask these questions by phone or chat and write the answers, with the date and the name of the person you spoke to, in the cheat-sheet in Chapter 28.

FROM BILL

My honest advice

For a one- or two-person business with simple needs, the least expensive plan with a phone menu is usually plenty. Don't pay for features you'll never use. And remember: the hardest part isn't the service you pick — it's moving your number carefully, which is what Part 3 is about.

PART 3

Keeping Your Number

How to move your existing business number to a new service without missing a call — and the one mistake that can lose it for good.

CHAPTER 8

Moving (Porting) Your Existing Number

Porting means moving your phone number from one company to another. You keep the same number; only the company behind it changes. Your customers never need to know anything happened.

The golden rule: don't cancel first

This is the single most important thing in this guide. **Keep your old service active and unchanged until the new company tells you the move is complete.** The number belongs to the account it's on. If you cancel that account first, the number can be released, reassigned, or simply lost, and then there's nothing left to move.

STAY SAFE

Cancel last, not first

Sign up with the new provider, start the port, wait for the new provider's confirmation that it's done, make a test call, and **only then** cancel the old service. Google's own help says plainly: don't cancel your existing service until you're notified that the port is complete.

What you'll need

Item	Where to find it
A recent bill	From your current company. It shows most of what's asked for. Some providers want a copy from the last month or so.
Account number	Your account number with the current company — exactly as it's printed on the bill.
Name on the account	Exactly as the current company has it. A small difference ("Inc." or a missing middle initial) can get the move rejected.
Service address	The physical address on the account. No P.O. boxes.
Port-out PIN	Many companies, especially cell carriers, require a special PIN or "transfer PIN" to release a number. You get it from the current company.
Letter of Authorization	A form (often called the LOA) saying you approve the move. The new company usually has you sign it online.

Things that slow a port down

- A name, address or account number that doesn't exactly match the old company's records.
- A wrong or missing transfer PIN.
- A number that's still **locked** by the old company. Some cell carriers offer a lock that blocks transfers; you have to turn it off or get a PIN first.
- Extra services tied to the line, like DSL internet or a hunt group (several lines that roll over). Google asks you to remove those first.
- An unpaid balance with the old company, which some companies use to hold things up.

HEADS UP

DSL internet on the same line

If your internet comes over the same phone line you're porting (older DSL service), moving the number can affect your internet. Ask your current company before you start, and line up new internet first if needed.

How long it takes

Some simple moves take a few business days. Business numbers, several numbers at once, and toll-free numbers often take one to several weeks. Each provider gives you an estimated date, called the **port date** or activation date, once the old company accepts the request.

TIP

Use a temporary number meanwhile

Most providers give you a temporary number right away. Use it to set up your phone menu and test your apps while you wait, so everything is ready the moment your real number arrives.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Done carefully, porting means your customers keep dialing the number they already know, and nothing printed on your truck, cards or website has to change.

CHAPTER 9

Porting Step by Step

Every provider has its own form, but the steps are much the same. Here's the general order, then where to find the form at each of the three services in this guide.

The general order

1. Gather your recent bill, account number, exact account name, service address and transfer PIN (Chapter 8).
2. Sign up with the new provider. Leave your old service alone.
3. Fill in the new provider's port request and sign the Letter of Authorization.
4. Wait for an accepted date. Answer any questions the provider emails you about mismatches — quickly.
5. Set up your phone menu, voicemail and apps on the temporary number in the meantime.
6. On port day, make a test call to your business number from a cell phone. Then test a text.
7. Only after everything works: call the old company and cancel any remaining service.

RingCentral

1. Sign in to the RingCentral **Admin Portal**.
2. Go to **Phone System** > **Phone Numbers** > **Number Port In**.
3. Enter the numbers you're moving, your current carrier's account details and any PIN.
4. Agree to the Letter of Authorization, and upload a PDF of your latest bill (RingCentral asks for one no more than 45 days old; a screenshot may be refused).
5. Watch your email for updates. If the request is rejected for a mismatch, you can fix it and send it again from the Admin Portal.

Ooma Office

Ooma Office handles number transfers through its setup process and its support team. Choose the option to **transfer an existing number** when you sign up, or contact Ooma support to start one. Have the same information ready: your bill, account number, exact name, service address and PIN.

Google Voice

1. The person doing this needs the **Google Voice Admin** role in your Google Workspace account.
2. Sign in to the **Google Admin console** at admin.google.com.
3. Go to **Apps** > **Google Workspace** > **Google Voice** > **Number porting**.
4. Choose **Create port order** and follow the steps, using details from your recent bill.
5. Don't cancel your old service until Google notifies you that the port is complete.

GOOD TO KNOW

What Google Voice can't take

Google Voice can't take in **toll-free** numbers (800, 888 and so on), or numbers on a personal Gmail account. Google also asks for some lead time — plan on a couple of weeks or more — and only takes numbers from phone companies it supports.

TIP

Pick a quiet day

Ask for a port date on a slower day of the week for your business, not the day before a holiday or your busiest season.

CHAPTER 10

When a Port Gets Stuck or Rejected

Ports get rejected more often than you'd think, and almost always for a small, fixable reason. Don't panic, and don't cancel anything.

The usual reasons

Rejection reason	What to do
Name mismatch	Use the account name exactly as it appears on the old bill.
Wrong address	Use the **service** address on the old account, not your mailing address.
Wrong account number	Some bills show several numbers. Call the old company and ask for the account number used for porting.
Wrong or missing PIN	Ask the old company for a transfer PIN. Cell carriers often create one in their app or website.
Number locked	Ask the old company to remove any port-out lock or block, or give you the PIN that releases it.
Extra services on the line	Ask the old company to remove features like hunt groups first.

Steps when it's stuck

1. Read the rejection notice slowly. It usually says which detail didn't match.
2. Call the **old** company and ask for their porting or number-transfer department, not general customer service. Ask them to read back the exact account name, account number and service address.
3. Correct the request with the new provider and send it again.
4. Keep paying the old bill until the port finishes, so the number stays active.

GOOD TO KNOW

You have a right to move your number

Under federal rules, phone companies have to let you move your number to another company. If one unreasonably refuses or stalls, you can file a complaint with the FCC at fcc.gov/complaints.

HEADS UP

If you need to stop a port

Changed your mind? Contact the **new** provider right away, before the port date. RingCentral, for example, takes cancellation requests for pending transfers by email to its porting team.

Moving away later

The same rules work in the other direction. If you ever leave a provider, start the port with the **next** company first, and keep the account open until the number has moved. Before you leave, write down your account number and ask how to get a transfer PIN, if one is needed.

FROM BILL

Worth a second set of eyes

Porting is the one part of switching where a mistake can cost you your number. If you'd like someone to check the form with you before you submit it, that's a short, worthwhile call.

PART 4

Setting Up How Calls Ring

Your phone menu, business hours, holiday closings, voicemail, and who answers which calls.

CHAPTER 11

Setting Up a Phone Menu (Auto-Attendant)

A phone menu greets every caller and sends them to the right place: "Thank you for calling Smith Hardware. For store hours, press 1. For the service desk, press 2. To reach anyone, press 0." Each service names it differently — **Virtual Receptionist** at Ooma, **Auto-Receptionist** or IVR at RingCentral, **auto attendant** at Google Voice — but it's the same idea.

Plan it on paper first

1. Write your greeting in one or two short sentences. Say the business name first.
2. List no more than four or five choices. Fewer is friendlier.
3. Always offer **0** for a person (or for the main voicemail). Callers who are older, hard of hearing or in a hurry will thank you.
4. Decide what happens if the caller presses nothing. Usually: ring the main phone.
5. Read it out loud and time it. Aim for 20 seconds or less before the first choice.

> TIP
> **Put the most common choice first**
> If most callers want your hours or your address, offer that as choice 1, or say it in the greeting itself. Many callers then never need to press anything.

Ooma Office: the Virtual Receptionist

1. Sign in to the admin website at **office.ooma.com**.
2. Open the **Virtual Receptionist** settings.
3. Record or upload your greeting. You can record it by phone, upload a sound file, or type text for a computer voice to read.
4. Add your menu choices — up to 10 numbered options — and pick where each one goes: a person's extension, a ring group, a voicemail box or a recorded message.
5. Set up a separate **after-hours menu** for when you're closed (Chapter 12).
6. Save, then call your business number from a cell phone to hear it.

Google Voice: auto attendants (Standard or Premier)

1. Sign in to the **Google Admin console** at admin.google.com.
2. Go to **Apps** > **Google Workspace** > **Google Voice** > **Auto attendants**.
3. Create a new auto attendant, and give it a greeting and menu options.
4. Assign it a Voice phone number that isn't already given to a person. This becomes the number callers dial.
5. Use **Preview** to try it before you publish it.

RingCentral: the Auto-Receptionist

In the RingCentral **Admin Portal**, the main company number answers with the **Auto-Receptionist**. There you set the company greeting and build an IVR menu with key presses. RingCentral has many options here; if the screens look busy, set up only the greeting and three or four choices, and leave the rest alone.

GOOD TO KNOW

A computer voice or your own?

Most services can read your typed greeting aloud with a computer voice. It's quick and easy to change. A greeting recorded in your own (or a staff member's) calm, clear voice often feels friendlier to longtime customers. Either works.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A short, clear menu means callers reach the right person the first time, and you stop answering the same "What are your hours?" question ten times a day.

CHAPTER 12

Business Hours, Holiday Hours and Closings

Your phone system can follow your schedule automatically: one greeting and menu while you're open, another when you're closed, and special handling on holidays. Set it once and it switches on its own.

Ooma Office

1. At **office.ooma.com**, open the Virtual Receptionist's schedule settings.
2. Name the schedule. Pick a day of the week and drag across the hours you're open. You can fine-tune times in 15-minute steps, and add two ranges in one day if you close for lunch.
3. Anything you leave blank counts as **after hours**.
4. Under **Holiday Hours**, add each date you're closed, with a name such as "Thanksgiving." Save.

On a holiday, callers hear your **after-hours menu** all day. If you change a schedule, the change applies to every Virtual Receptionist that uses it.

Google Voice

Open the auto attendant in the Admin console and look for its **working hours**. Choose 24 hours a day or set custom hours. Then add an after-hours greeting and choices, and add your closed dates under **Holiday closures**. Ring groups have their own working hours and holiday closures, too, so check both.

RingCentral

In the Admin Portal, the company number has **business hours** and an **after hours** setting, and you can add special rules for holidays. Each person's extension can have its own hours as well.

A good after-hours greeting

- Say you're closed, and when you'll be open again.
- Give your website address if you have one.
- Offer voicemail, and say when you return calls.

- If you take emergency calls (a plumber or heating company, say), give a choice for that and send it to the on-call cell phone.

TIP

Set next year's holidays in December

Make it a yearly habit: each December, add the coming year's holiday closures. It takes five minutes and saves a confused caller on New Year's Day.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Callers always hear the right message for the time of day, and you don't have to remember to switch anything when you lock the door at night.

CHAPTER 13

Voicemail and Greetings

Every person (and often the main menu) gets a voicemail box. With an internet phone system, voicemail is easier to check than ever: it shows up in the app, and usually in your email too.

Set up your voicemail box

1. Open the provider's app on your phone, or sign in to its website.
2. Find **Voicemail** or **Greetings** in your settings.
3. Record a personal greeting. Keep it short: your name, the business name, and when you'll call back.
4. Turn on **voicemail to email** (some services call it voicemail notifications) so each message arrives in your inbox.
5. Leave yourself a test message from another phone to be sure it works.

Voicemail transcripts

Most services can turn a voicemail into text, called a **transcript**. Google Voice shows transcripts in the app and in email. They're handy for skimming between jobs, but they get names and numbers wrong sometimes, so play the recording before you call back a number you can't read clearly.

> **HEADS UP**
>
> **Check the main mailbox, too**
>
> If your menu has a "leave a message for the office" choice, make sure someone actually checks that box, and that its messages go to an email you read. A full or forgotten mailbox is a common reason businesses miss calls.

Sample greetings

Box	Example
Personal box	"You've reached Mary at Smith Hardware. Please leave your name and number, and I'll call you back today."
After hours	"Thanks for calling Smith Hardware. We're closed right now. We're open Monday through Friday, 8 to 5, and Saturday 9 to noon. Please leave a message."
Holiday	"Smith Hardware is closed today for the holiday. We'll be open again tomorrow at 8."

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Messages land in your email as you work, so nothing sits unheard on a desk phone across town.

CHAPTER 14

Who Answers: Ring Groups, Forwarding and Extensions

Now decide who rings when. This is where the paper list from Chapter 3 pays off.

The three tools

Tool	What it does
Extension	A short number for one person or phone. Ext. 101 might be the front counter.
Ring group	Several phones that ring for one call — all at once, or one after another. Ooma and RingCentral may call this a **call group** or **call queue**; Google Voice calls it a **ring group** (Standard and Premier only).
Call forwarding	Sending calls on to another number, such as your cell phone, after a few rings or all the time.

A simple setup for a small shop

1. Main menu choice 1 rings a **ring group** with the counter phone and the office phone together.
2. If no one answers in about 20 seconds, the call rings the owner's cell phone app.
3. If still no answer, it goes to the main voicemail box.
4. After hours, the menu skips the ring group and plays the closed greeting.

> TIP
> **Count rings in seconds**
> Most services ask how long to ring before moving on, in seconds. About five seconds is one ring. Twenty to twenty-five seconds is a polite wait before going to the next phone.

Forwarding to a cell phone

Every service in this guide can forward calls to a regular cell number. But the better choice is usually the provider's **app** on your cell phone (Chapter 15). With the app, you can tell a business call from a personal one, and when you call customers back, they see your business number.

HEADS UP

Forwarded calls can land in your personal voicemail

If you forward business calls to your cell and don't answer, your *cell's* voicemail may pick up before the business voicemail does. Set the ring time a bit shorter than your cell's voicemail, or use the app instead of plain forwarding.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Calls find the right person wherever they are, and the business doesn't depend on one desk phone being staffed.

PART 5

Phones, Apps and Fax

Your business line on your cell phone and computer, desk phones and headsets, and faxing without a fax machine.

CHAPTER 15

Your Business Line on Your Cell Phone

This is the feature most small-business owners love best. Install your provider's app, sign in, and your cell phone becomes a second phone with your **business** number. Your personal number stays private.

The apps

Service	App
RingCentral	The **RingCentral** app, for iPhone, Android, Windows and Mac.
Ooma Office	The **Ooma Office** app for iPhone and Android.
Google Voice	The **Google Voice** app for iPhone and Android, plus voice.google.com in a web browser.

Setting it up

1. On your phone, open the **App Store** (iPhone) or **Play Store** (Android).
2. Search for your provider's app by name. Check that it's from the real company — RingCentral, Ooma or Google — before you tap **Get** or **Install**.
3. Open the app and sign in with your business account (the one your administrator set up for you).
4. When the phone asks, **allow** the app to use the microphone and send notifications. Without these, calls can't ring or be heard.
5. Make a test call to a friend. Ask what number showed up on their screen. It should be your business number.

HEADS UP

Call back from the app, not the phone's dialer

If you return a customer's call by tapping their number in your phone's regular call list, it goes out from your **personal** number. Return business calls from inside the business app.

Quiet time

Most apps have a **Do Not Disturb** or status setting, and they follow your business hours. Use them so the business line doesn't ring at the dinner table. Callers then get your menu or voicemail instead.

TIP

Wi-Fi or cell data both work

The app uses Wi-Fi when you have it and cell data when you don't. A call uses only a small amount of data. On weak signal, calls may sound choppy — step outside or closer to the router.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can run the business from your pocket without giving customers your personal number, and when you hire help or sell the business someday, the number stays with the business.

CHAPTER 16

Desk Phones: Keep, Buy or Skip?

Many small businesses still want a phone on the counter. With VoIP, that phone plugs into your internet (usually a network cable to your router) instead of the old phone jack.

Can I keep the phones I have?

- **Old phones from the phone company** (plugged into a wall jack) usually won't work directly. Some services sell or rent a small adapter for them; Ooma also sells its own base station for this.
- **Phones from an older business phone system** (the kind with a box in the back closet) usually only work with that system.
- **Existing internet desk phones** (often called **IP phones** or SIP phones, from makers like Poly or Yealink) may work if your new provider lists that model as supported. Ask before you assume.

Buying new ones

1. Ask your provider for its list of supported or certified phones. Buy from that list.
2. Consider buying through the provider. Their phones often arrive set up and ready to plug in.
3. Choose a cordless model if staff move around the shop or office.
4. Check whether the phone needs a power outlet or can get power through its network cable (called **PoE**, or Power over Ethernet).

GOOD TO KNOW

Skip the desk phone if you can

If you answer most calls on the go, you may not need a desk phone at all. The app on your cell, or a headset on your computer, can do everything a desk phone does.

HEADS UP

Older people and big buttons

If an older family member or longtime employee answers the phone, pick a desk phone with large buttons and a clear screen, and label the buttons they use most. A familiar desk phone can make the change much easier on them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The right phone on the counter means staff answer the same way they always have, with no learning curve, while the business gets all the new features behind the scenes.

CHAPTER 17

Calling from Your Computer, and Headsets

If you sit at a desk much of the day, you can make and take business calls right on your computer. The computer version is often called a **softphone**.

How each service does it

- **RingCentral**: the RingCentral desktop app for Windows and Mac, or in a web browser.
- **Ooma Office**: a desktop app is included with the Pro plans.
- **Google Voice**: open **voice.google.com** in Chrome or another supported browser.

A headset makes a big difference

Computer speakers and microphones can make you sound far away and can cause echo. A simple wired USB headset, or a Bluetooth headset with a microphone, makes calls clearer for both sides.

1. Plug in or pair the headset.
2. In the calling app, open **Settings** and look for **Audio** or **Devices**.
3. Choose the headset for both the speaker and the microphone.
4. Make a test call. Many apps have a built-in test.

TIP

Let the browser use the microphone

The first time you call from a web browser, a small box asks to **Allow** the microphone. Click Allow. If you clicked Block by mistake, click the small icon at the left end of the address bar and change the microphone setting.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can look up an order or a customer's file on the same screen you're talking on, without juggling a handset.

CHAPTER 18

Sending and Receiving Faxes

Some customers, doctors' offices, insurance companies and government offices still use fax. You don't need a fax machine or a separate fax line anymore. With an online fax service, faxes arrive in your email as PDF files, and you send them from your computer.

Ooma Office Virtual Fax

- An administrator turns on **Virtual Fax** for a user's extension. Ooma says each user can have it at no additional cost.
- That extension gets its own fax number.
- Incoming faxes arrive in email as PDF attachments.
- To send, upload a PDF or TIFF file in the Ooma **End User Portal** (or the desktop app) and enter the fax number.

RingCentral

RingCentral includes online faxing on its RingEX plans. You can send and receive faxes in the RingCentral app and by email. Ask how many fax pages your plan includes.

Google Voice

Google Voice doesn't send or receive faxes. If you use Google Voice and still need fax now and then, use a separate online fax service, and give it its own number.

HEADS UP

Faxes can carry private information

Medical, legal and financial faxes often contain private details. Send them only to the email of the person who should see them, and don't forward a fax PDF to a shared family email address.

GOOD TO KNOW

Keeping your old fax number

A fax number can usually be ported just like a voice number (Chapter 8). Port it to whichever service will receive your faxes.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can stop paying for a separate fax line and a machine that jams, and faxes reach you wherever you read email.

PART 6

Texting Customers

Texting from your business number, the registration that keeps your texts from being blocked, and texting customers the right way.

CHAPTER 19

Business Texting Basics

Customers increasingly like a text: "Your order is ready," "I'm on my way," "See you Tuesday at 10." With business texting, those texts come from your **business** number, and anyone on your team with access can see the conversation.

What each service offers

Service	Texting
RingCentral	Texting in the RingCentral app on every RingEX plan, with a monthly allowance of texts per user, shared across the account.
Ooma Office	Texting on **Pro** (250 texts per user each month) and **Pro Plus** (1,000). Not on Essentials.
Google Voice	Texting in the Google Voice app, U.S. only for business accounts, meant for one-to-one conversations.

Google Voice is for conversations, not mass texts

Google says business texting in Google Voice is meant for **one-to-one** conversations. Sending the same text to many people, especially if they don't reply, or sending a lot of texts in a short time, can get your messages flagged as spam and blocked. If you want to send a reminder to your whole customer list, use a service built for that.

Good uses for business texting

- Appointment confirmations and reminders to customers who asked for them.
- "Your repair is ready for pickup."
- Answering a customer who texted your business number first.
- A quick photo of a part or problem, to and from a customer.

TIP

Turn on texting before you print it

Don't put "Call or text" on your truck or cards until you've tested a text to and from your business number. On most services, texting doesn't work until the registration in Chapter 20 is approved.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Customers who would never leave a voicemail will answer a text, and the whole conversation is saved in one place with your business number.

CHAPTER 20

Texting Registration (10DLC)

Here's something that surprises nearly everyone. In the U.S., the big cell carriers require businesses that text from a regular 10-digit phone number to **register** first. The system is called **10DLC** ("ten-digit long code"). Since early 2025, the carriers **block** unregistered business texts.

Why it exists

Registration is meant to cut down on spam and scam texts. Each business (called a **brand**) tells the carriers who it is, and describes what kind of texts it will send (called a **campaign**), such as appointment reminders or customer service.

What you'll be asked for

- Your business's legal name, address and type of business.
- Your **EIN** (Employer Identification Number). A business with no EIN can often register as a **sole proprietor**, with lower limits — usually one phone number.
- A working website, which some providers check.
- A description of what you'll text, a sample message, and how customers agree to receive texts.

How it works with your provider

1. Look in your provider's admin website for a business texting or SMS registration form.
2. Fill it out carefully, with your name and address **exactly** as they appear on your IRS records.
3. Submit it. Approval can take days to a few weeks.
4. Watch your email. If it's rejected, the reason is usually a mismatched name or a missing website.
5. Once approved, test a text to a family member's cell phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

There are small fees

The carriers charge small one-time and monthly registration fees, which providers pass along. They vary by provider and plan, so ask yours. Ooma Office, for example, turns on texting only after you complete its registration form.

SCAM ALERT

Watch for fake "registration" emails

Scammers send emails saying your texting registration is about to expire or needs a payment. Don't click links in those emails. Sign in to your provider's website directly, the way you always do, and look there.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Registered texts actually reach your customers' phones instead of disappearing without a trace.

CHAPTER 21

Texting the Right Way: Permission and STOP

Texting customers is a privilege they give you. A few simple habits keep it that way, and keep you on the right side of the rules.

Get permission first

- Text customers who have given you their number **and** agreed to texts — for example, a checkbox on your work order: "OK to text me about my appointment."
- Replying to a customer who texted you first is fine.
- Don't buy lists of phone numbers or text people who never gave you theirs.

Honor STOP

If anyone replies **STOP**, stop texting them. Many services handle this automatically and block further texts to that number. Don't try to work around it.

Polite habits

- Say who you are: "Hi, this is Smith Hardware."
- Text during reasonable daytime hours.
- Keep it short and useful.
- Never text passwords, card numbers or Social Security numbers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Marketing texts have stricter rules

Sales and promotional texts are covered by federal rules (the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, or TCPA) that require clear written permission. If you plan to send coupons or sales by text, talk to a professional or use a marketing-text service that walks you through consent. This guide sticks to everyday customer texts.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Customers trust your texts, read them, and keep wanting them.

PART 7

911, Outages and Safety

Keeping your 911 address right, staying reachable when the power or internet goes out, recording calls, and the scams aimed at business numbers.

CHAPTER 22

911 and Your Address

This is the most important chapter in the guide. With an old phone line, 911 knew your address from the wire. With VoIP, your provider sends the address **you** registered. If it's wrong, help can be sent to the wrong place.

What the rules say, in plain English

- Your provider has to send a **dispatchable location** with a 911 call — a street address, plus a floor or suite if needed — so responders know exactly where to go. For a desk phone that stays put, this happens automatically. For an app or phone that moves around, it uses the address registered for it or the best location the provider can get.
- Under a federal rule called **Kari's Law**, business phone systems must let anyone dial **911** directly, without pressing 9 or any other number first, and must notify someone in the business (such as the front desk) when a 911 call is made, where the system can do that.

What you need to do

1. When you set up your account, enter your business's full **street address**, with suite or floor. No P.O. boxes.
2. If you have more than one location, register each desk phone at its own address.
3. If you take a desk phone or adapter to a new place, **update the 911 address** before you use it there.
4. In the cell phone app, check the app's emergency address setting. When in doubt, call 911 from your cell phone's **regular** dialer, not the business app.
5. Check the 911 address once a year, and any time you move.

STAY SAFE

In a real emergency

Call 911 from whatever phone works fastest, and **say your address out loud** right away. Never assume the address showed up correctly.

GOOD TO KNOW

Don't test by calling 911

Don't make a "test" call to 911. If you want to confirm the address your provider has on file, look in the admin website's emergency address settings, or ask the provider's support.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If anyone at your business ever needs help, the ambulance or fire truck goes to the right door.

CHAPTER 23

When the Power or Internet Goes Out

Internet phones need power and internet. When either goes out, desk phones go quiet. The FCC asks VoIP providers to tell customers about this, and the good news is that a little planning keeps you reachable.

Set up a backup forwarding number

Most services let you choose where calls go if your desk phones can't be reached — often called **failover** or **outage forwarding**. Set it to the owner's cell phone. Calls then ring your cell during an outage, even though the desk phones are off.

Keep things on a battery

- Plug the modem, router and any desk phone (or its base station) into a battery backup, called a **UPS**. Even a small one can keep the phones working through a short outage.
- Keep cell phones charged. The business app works on cell data when the internet is down.
- Know where the modem and router are, and how to restart them (unplug for 30 seconds, plug back in).

TIP

Have a second internet option

If your phones are essential, ask about a backup: many routers can switch to a cell-data hotspot when the main internet fails. Your cell phone's hotspot can work in a pinch for one or two people.

When the internet is just slow

Choppy or robotic-sounding calls usually mean the internet connection is busy or unsteady. Try pausing big downloads or streaming during business hours, plugging desk phones into the router with a cable, and restarting the router. If it keeps happening, call your internet provider.

STAY SAFE

911 during an outage

If the power or internet is out, a VoIP desk phone can't call 911. Use a cell phone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A storm or a cut cable doesn't mean lost calls: customers still reach you, just on a different phone.

CHAPTER 24

Recording Calls

Most business phone services can record calls, either when you press a button or automatically. Recordings help with training, settling a "he said, she said" about an order, or remembering details. But recording is covered by law, so go carefully.

The rules, in general terms

- **Ohio** and federal law generally allow a call to be recorded when at least **one** person on the call agrees — which can be you.
- Some other states require **everyone** on the call to agree. If you talk with customers in other states, their state's rules may apply.
- Recording a call you're not part of is a different matter, and can be a crime.

The simple, safe habit

Tell callers. A line in your greeting — "This call may be recorded for quality" — or simply saying "I'm going to record this so I get the details right" covers you almost everywhere, and it's courteous.

GOOD TO KNOW

I'm not a lawyer

This is general information, not legal advice. If recordings are important to your business, or you deal with customers in many states, ask an attorney.

Where recordings go

- Recordings are usually kept in the provider's admin website or app for a set time, then deleted.
- Download any you need to keep.
- Limit who on staff can listen to them, since recordings may contain private information.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

When a detail matters, you can play it back instead of relying on memory.

CHAPTER 25

Scams Aimed at Business Phones

Your business number is valuable, and scammers know it. Here are the common tricks and how to stop them.

Number hijacking (port-out and SIM-swap fraud)

A criminal pretends to be you and asks a phone company to move your number to **their** phone. Then they receive your calls and your sign-in codes for banking and email. In 2023, the FCC adopted rules requiring cell carriers to use secure checks before moving a number or SIM, and to notify you right away when someone asks.

1. Set a **port-out PIN** or transfer PIN with every phone company that has one of your numbers, and keep it private.
2. If your carrier offers a **number lock** or port freeze, turn it on. Turn it off only when you're moving the number yourself.
3. Use a strong, unique password and two-step sign-in on your phone provider's admin account.
4. If your phone suddenly says **No Service** or SOS for no reason, call your carrier from another phone right away.

SCAM ALERT

"This is your phone company calling"

A caller says your service will be cut off unless you pay now, or asks you to read back a code that was just texted to you. Hang up. Never read a code to someone who called you. Call the number on your bill instead.

SCAM ALERT

Fake invoices for "listings" and phone services

Businesses get bills and calls for directory listings, "Google verification" or phone services they never ordered. Check with whoever handles your accounts before paying anything you don't recognize.

SCAM ALERT

Robocalls with a computer voice

Recorded calls claiming to be about your business listing, your merchant account or your phone service are almost always scams. Don't press any number. Just hang up.

SCAM ALERT

Caller ID can lie

Scammers can fake the number that appears on caller ID, even your own bank's or phone company's number. If a call makes you nervous, hang up and call back using a number you look up yourself.

If you think your number was stolen

1. Call your phone provider's fraud or porting department from another phone.
2. Change the passwords on your email and bank accounts, starting with email.
3. Call your bank and tell them.
4. Report it to the FCC at fcc.gov/complaints and the FBI at ic3.gov.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few minutes setting a PIN and a lock protects the number your whole business depends on.

PART 8

Keeping It Running

Adding and removing staff, your monthly bill, canceling, when a hand helps, and your cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 26

Adding Staff, Removing Staff, and Your Bill

Your phone system grows and shrinks with your business. Each person usually counts as one user on your bill.

When someone joins

1. Sign in to the admin website (RingCentral Admin Portal, office.ooma.com, or the Google Admin console).
2. Add a user, which adds one user to your monthly bill.
3. Give them an extension and, if needed, their own direct number.
4. Add them to the right ring group, and set up their voicemail.
5. Have them install the app on their phone and sign in (Chapter 15).

When someone leaves

1. The same day, **remove their access** or sign them out of the app, so business calls and texts stop reaching their personal phone.
2. Move their direct number to someone else, or to the main menu, rather than deleting it. Customers may still call it.
3. Take them out of ring groups and menu choices.
4. Save any voicemails or texts the business needs.
5. Remove the user so you stop paying for them.

HEADS UP

Don't delete a number by accident

Deleting a user can sometimes release their phone number back to the provider. Reassign a number you want to keep **before** removing the user.

Reading your bill

- The plan price times the number of users.
- Extra numbers, toll-free minutes, or add-ons.
- Taxes and regulatory fees, which add to every phone bill.
- Equipment, if you bought or rent phones from the provider.

TIP

Look at the bill once a quarter

Check that you're not paying for people who've left, extra numbers you don't use, or a trial add-on that turned into a monthly charge.

Canceling a service

If you're switching providers, port your number **first** (Chapter 8), then cancel. If you're closing the business line for good, ask whether you can port the number to an inexpensive service to keep it, in case you need it later. Ask about any contract or early-termination charges before you cancel.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

Most of this you can do yourself, at your own pace. But some jobs are easier with a second pair of hands.

A hand is worth it when

- You're moving your number and want someone to check the port form before you submit it.
- You need help choosing between services, with your real call patterns in mind.
- You'd like your phone menu, hours and voicemail set up, and tested, in one sitting.
- Desk phones need to be plugged in, connected and checked, or your router needs a look for choppy calls.
- You want the app set up on everyone's phone, including a family member who helps out.
- You think your number or account may have been hijacked.

What working with me is like

I serve Portage County, and I work at your pace. I bring more than 30 years of professional experience, and I explain what I'm doing as I go so you can handle it next time. No pressure, no jargon, and I won't sell you a phone service. I'll help you set up the one that fits.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

$49 remote · $99 in your home. Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Meet Sophie

When you call or visit the website, you may be greeted by Sophie, my AI receptionist. She can answer common questions and book a time for us to talk.

CHAPTER 28

Your Business Phone Cheat-Sheet

The essentials, all in one place.

Topic	Remember
Golden rule	Never cancel old phone service until the new company confirms your number has moved.
Porting needs	Recent bill, account number, exact account name, service address, transfer PIN.
Phone menu	Short greeting, four or five choices, always offer 0 for a person.
Hours	Set business hours and holiday closures; update holidays each December.
Texting	Register first (10DLC); text people who agreed; honor STOP.
911	Register your full street address; update it if a phone moves; use a cell in an outage.
Outages	Outage forwarding to a cell; modem, router and phones on a battery backup.
Scams	Set a port-out PIN; never read a texted code to a caller; hang up and call back.

Write it down once

Item	Yours
Phone provider	_____
Admin website	_____
Admin sign-in (who has it)	_____
Account number	_____
Port-out / transfer PIN (keep private)	_____
Business number(s)	_____
911 address on file	_____
Provider support number	_____
Internet provider and support number	_____
Date I last checked the bill	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Is it everyone, or one phone? If one phone, restart it or sign out of the app and back in.
2. Is the internet working? Try a website. If not, restart the modem and router.
3. Is the power out? Calls should be forwarding to the outage number on your cell.
4. Check the provider's status page or call their support.
5. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.