

# Get a Grip on Hands-Free Communication



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Between men in business suits having loud conversations through their Bluetooth® earpieces in coffee shops and tech lovers wearing Google Glasses™ in the mall, hands-free technology has, at times, suffered from an image problem.



Hands-free communication can help your contact center employees provide better customer service.

Fortunately, there are millions of people who use hands-free technology in volume-appropriate and non-annoying ways. Indeed, hands-free communication is gaining a firm foothold in the enterprise world, where its flexibility and ability to enable multitasking provide productivity benefits to employees and their organizations.

Hands-free communication technology is being used in a number of ways as a business collaboration tool, including the following:

- Contact center workers can handle customer calls while liberating their hands to type on a computer keyboard, use a mouse, or manipulate a touchscreen. Agents can handle a greater volume of calls in a specific time frame because they can more efficiently use their hands.
- Hospitals can make it easier for clinicians along the care continuum to share information and collaborate. One recent case study from the Health Information and Management Systems Society showed that a hands-free integrated communications system improved patient satisfaction and staff morale while increasing nurse/patient contact time.

- Field workers can receive instructions and communicate with colleagues while working on building construction, equipment installation, and emergency repairs.
- Journalists, writers, and other content providers can use hands-free technology to take notes while talking with subject experts and other information sources.
- Entertainers and event speakers can communicate and receive instructions from directors and other production crew members.

Hands-free communication technologies can run the gamut from basic headset and microphone devices, which plug into analog phone systems, to Bluetooth-compatible smartphones, to smartwatches, but the major advances in hands-free communication in recent years have come from cloud-based softphone applications.

## Softphone Applications

Softphone apps allow users to access VoIP calls from computing devices such as desktops, smartphones, tablets, and even iPods. As TechTarget explained, most softphone apps "work in conjunction with a headset and microphone, a specialized VoIP phone, or by using a device called an analog telephone adapter, which enables VoIP calling from a standard telephone handset."

As with any other software applications, softphone apps are built to run on specific operating systems such as Windows, iOS, and Android. Cloud-based softphone apps include a number of functions vital to business communications, such as the ability to do the following:

- Make VoIP and video calls over the internet
- Make and receive phone calls over Wi-Fi and other wireless networks
- Manage contacts
- Send instant messages
- Transfer files
- Forward calls
- Integrate with email software

Some softphone apps can even provide the equivalent of a Private Branch Exchange (PBX) phone system, which allows businesses to route and manage call traffic internally and externally. Given that PBX systems can carry high per-user costs, it's easy to see how softphone apps can help smaller and midsize businesses avoid crippling capital expenditures. In addition, a click-to-call service can provide a fast and easy way for customers to phone your business through a button on your website or email signature.

Cloud-based softphone apps combined with VoIP not only offer businesses advanced communications functionality at a lower cost than legacy business phone systems, but they also enable greater flexibility for employees and enterprise resource planners. And because employees are given the tools to be more productive, they're happier and more likely to stick around to continue to enjoy their hands-free existence.

*Would you like to learn more about hands-free communication? Contact a Vonage Business consultant.*