White labelled blog article – The Great Switch-Off: What is it?

**Overview**

This article has been created to help your customers understand the Great Switch Off and what it means for them.

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# The Great Switch-Off: What is it?

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) has played a vital role in telecommunications for nearly 150 years, aiding voice communication for homes and businesses across the UK. Yet with the rapid evolution of digital technology, the time has arrived for the PSTN Switch-Off.

In this article, we will delve into the reasons behind this transition, its repercussions for both businesses and consumers, and the forward-looking digital solutions that are reshaping the telecommunications landscape.

**The PSTN Era:**

The PSTN revolutionised communication by establishing a reliable and extensive network for voice calls. In the 1990s, it was adapted to provide data connections over the same infrastructure. However, the PSTN primarily relies on copper wires, making it vulnerable to degradation, interference, and adverse weather conditions, which can impact both voice and internet connectivity. Additionally, the telephone exchange equipment is nearing the end of its operational life, becoming increasingly challenging to obtain and costly to maintain.

**The All-IP Future:**

The decision to phase out the traditional telephone network stems mainly from outdated technology and advances in telecommunications. Maintaining the PSTN has become financially burdensome, prompting communication providers to seize the opportunity to retire outdated infrastructure, reduce maintenance expenses, and concentrate on delivering modern services.

While we've made significant progress since the era of dial-up internet, some individuals still deal with sluggish internet connections, especially in the age of remote work and video streaming. Enter full fibre broadband.

Instead of relying on copper wires, Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) employs fibre optic cables to provide internet services, offering a much more resilient network than the legacy PSTN and delivering speeds of up to 1Gbps. The full fibre network is currently undergoing nationwide deployment, with over 10.4 million premises gaining access to ultrafast broadband as of June 2023.

For those not yet able to access FTTP, SOGEA presents a viable option for future-proof connectivity. Combining copper and fibre technology, SOGEA provides speeds of up to 80Mbps without the need for a traditional landline.

For those still requiring telephony services, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) comes into play. VoIP employs a stable data connection, such as FTTP, to transmit voice communications, bypassing the PSTN in favour of internet-based calling.

**Implications for Businesses:**

The PSTN phase-out carries substantial implications for businesses relying on traditional telephone services. Organisations must transition to IP-based solutions to ensure uninterrupted voice communication. This transition opens doors for businesses to adopt Unified Communications (UC) solutions featuring advanced features like video conferencing, collaboration, and integration with other digital systems. However, it also forces infrastructure upgrades and thorough planning to ensure a seamless transition and minimal disruption to operations.

Businesses utilising services such as payment terminals, alarm systems, and elevator lines connected via landlines must review these services with their providers and ensure they have IP-based alternatives in place when the telephony network undergoes its phase-out.

**Implications for Consumers:**

For consumers, the closure of the PSTN brings both challenges and advantages. Traditional landline phones will become obsolete, and consumers in need of a fixed phone will need to ensure they have a fibre-based broadband connection and a VoIP-compatible handset.

**Emerging Alternatives:**

Now that you are informed of your options for replacing broadband and voice services, it's worth exploring how mobile technology can benefit both businesses and consumers in an All-IP environment.

Not only is the fixed telephony network undergoing significant changes, but UK mobile networks are also retiring 3G data networks in favour of faster 4G and 5G rollouts. These advancements in mobile networks enable users to access various communication apps and services that offer voice and video calling capabilities, encouraging people, especially consumers, to rely more on mobile phones as their primary means of communication and gradually move away from PSTN telephony.

**Make the Transition:**

The PSTN phase-out signifies the end of an era in telecommunications, but it also marks the beginning of a new digital future. While it presents challenges for businesses and consumers, it also unveils new possibilities through advanced digital communication technologies. It's crucial to embrace this change and adapt, as failing to do so could result in service disruptions.