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Skype Outage Lesson: Beware of virtual services for real business

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Moving to the cloud has risks. Relying on consumer services for business functions is even riskier, says Business Insider's Matt Rosoff, who recounts a learning about Skype that a lot of businesses are picking up the hard way.

In our case, Skype always fell into the category of things that don't work as advertised. Whether it was limitations with its mobile apps or [slim pickings between handsets](#), there were a lot of compromises. FM-quality audio was difficult. Even worse were dropped calls. A terrible two-some for radio producers and PRs all-over. According to hindsight, iPhone seems preferable (as long as you're not in NYC).

Free services like Skype and FreeConferenceCall.com are cases of you get what you pay for. When you pile up add-ons like voicemail, caller ID, and virtual numbers, we found alternatives. There's an expectation that people, and businesses, have that goes one step past features when they start paying for a free service. Skype, for example, doesn't live up to that. It's almost good enough to rely on. 'Tis a low bar for customer satisfaction.

Subscription services graded for small businesses seem to be the way to go for us. This is because there's accountability built into their revenue model. Two that haven't let us down are [Phonebooth](#) for VoIP (\$20/month) and [WebEx](#) for conferencing (\$49/month). An [AT&T Microcell](#) (\$20/month) possibly comes in handy for the home office.

If your business depends on it, it's probably worth paying for.

The funny thing is, that saying's also true for PR.