



# Your Complete Guide to International Toll Free Numbers

Numbers Guide Checklist

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because business is calling

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An international toll free number helps you give customers and prospects easy access to your business. This access lets you build and support your business initiatives across the globe. But, deciding what type of freephone number best fits your business presents a challenge.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST: WHAT IS AN INTERNATIONAL TOLL FREE NUMBER?

An international toll free number is a freephone number that works in one country. That means a caller anywhere in the selected country can dial the toll free number free of charge to the caller. Sounds simple and straightforward. However, there are different types of international toll free numbers and their functions differ. The bonus is that each has the powerful capability to forward or divert to fixed, mobile, and SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) trunks or IP address.

### Type of Numbers

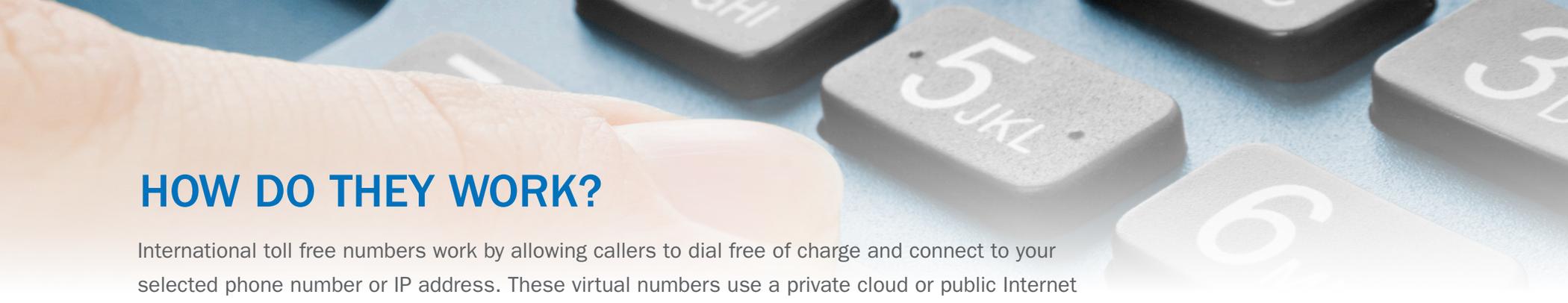
**International Toll Free Number (ITFS-International Toll Free Service):** Works within the selected country; usually cannot be called outside the selected country; free of charge to the caller; coverage and restrictions vary by country including possible mobile surcharges for caller using mobile phone

**Domestic Toll Free Number (DTF):** Country-specific number; generally, offers fewer restrictions across devices originating the call; call must originate in same country; normally accessible from all in-country mobile networks

**Universal International Freephone Number (UIFN):** A single toll free number that can be called from several selected countries; geographical coverage varies by provider; requires a single UIFN registration and monthly fees for each country covered ; access prefix to UIFN often varies by country

**Shared Cost Number:** Country-specific number that typically has a small connection fee or shared usage fee chargeable to the caller; caller's cost comparable to local call charges often covered by mobile plan free minutes; accessibility varies by geography, but generally offers excellent accessibility across all devices

**Vanity Number:** A type of domestic toll free or UIFN number that uses numbers that are easy to remember or that spell out a brand name



## HOW DO THEY WORK?

International toll free numbers work by allowing callers to dial free of charge and connect to your selected phone number or IP address. These virtual numbers use a private cloud or public Internet to receive or make calls using VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technology. With VoIP technology, you receive inbound calls on a softphone from your laptop or mobile phone anywhere you have Internet access. You can also forward calls to a landline or mobile phone at a small additional per-minute termination fee.

## FORWARDING FEATURE: YOUR “RING TO” NUMBER

The call forwarding (call divert) feature that lets you select the “ring to” number or IP address. For example, suppose your business and customer service center is in Germany, and that you have toll free numbers in the United Kingdom and the United States. You set the call forwarding for your UK and US toll free numbers to your customer service center in Germany. The calls are free to your customers. You pay to receive the call from your customer. If you forward your customer calls to an IP address that serves your German service center, the calls are usually free of charge. For calls forwarded to a landline or mobile number in Germany, you pay only a small terminating rate per minute.

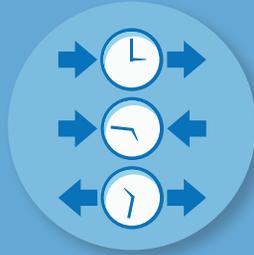
While almost all VoIP phone systems have a no-frills call forwarding feature that forwards one number to another, there are specific strategies to help ensure your inbound call goes to the right person or department.

## SELECT “RINGTO” AND DIVERT CALL STRATEGIES



### **Call Forwarding:**

Forward calls to other employees or agents; ring several extensions at once or sequentially, or ring directly to voicemail.



### **Time of Day Routing:**

Forward an inbound call based on time of day and day of week.



### **Percentage-based Routing:**

Route calls based on preferred volume at the selected ring to number; a select percent going to one number and another percent going to another.



### **Skills-based Routing:**

Forward calls to selected agents or departments based on type of inquiry.

Of course, establishing call forwarding strategies means that you need easy access to set up your call forwarding rules. Online access to that setup lets you configure your forwarding rules from anywhere through the Internet.

# HOW DO COVERAGES AND RESTRICTIONS AFFECT YOUR SELECTION?

All toll free numbers have their own set of coverage and restrictions based on geographies and type of number. The variety of options can cause confusion. The questions to answer are: who is calling my business, from where are they calling, and what device are they using?

Most international toll free numbers are country-specific. This means that a caller in Belgium can dial a Belgium toll free number free of charge when calling from within Belgium, but callers outside Belgium cannot call the number. Most toll free numbers are available free of charge to the caller as long as the call originates in that country. These calls forward to landline phones, VoIP softphones, mobile devices, and/or SIP trunks. And, some restrictions or additional charges apply based on what device the caller uses.

## International Toll Free Number (ITFS)

The general availability, competitive rates, and call forwarding flexibility make ITFS numbers a popular choice for businesses reaching out to customers internationally. Frequently, ITFS numbers have restrictions about calls from mobile or payphones—incurring surcharges or lacking accessibility to be dialed from those devices. Those restrictions vary by country.

## Domestic Toll Free Number (DTF)

The dialing format of a DTF number is one readily recognizable as free for the caller to use in country. The +1 800 USA Toll Free Number format is a good example. With a DTF number, there are usually no add-on charges for calls made from mobile phones and pay phones.

### Glossary of Terms for Devices and Rates

**Origination:** refers to location/device from where the caller dials

**Termination:** specific to location or device where the call routes for answering

**Fixed (Landline):** a physical telephone or wireline

**Mobile:** cell phone or tablet using cell phone carrier calling and data plans

**Payphone:** a telephone publicly available with service operated by coins or by a credit or prepaid card

**Blended:** a blended rate is one in which the termination rate is a mix or average of the varying rates for landline and mobile (for example)

**SIP (Session Initiation Protocol )Trunk:** direct connection between Internet telephony provider and organization via IP (Internet Protocol)

**IP Address:** number indicating network/device connecting to Internet for communication

**Surcharge:** additional amount added to standard fees



## Universal International Freephone Number (UIFN)

A common misunderstanding about international toll free numbers is that they are free to call or be called from anywhere in the world. While there is no “global toll free number,” UIFNs have limited availability for use in multiple countries.

Currently available for approximately 40 countries around the world, UIFNs have requirements and restrictions that take careful consideration when determining the value to your business and whether it addresses a specific business need effectively.

First, a UIFN must be registered in at least two countries and typically requires a significant, one-time setup fee. Additionally, you incur costs for each country selected—the more countries accessing the number, the higher the cost. Another consideration is that the UIFN has a different dialing format than typical toll free numbers, and is not as recognizable as free to call for all customers.

## Shared Cost Number

Call rates are generally lower for shared cost numbers since that cost is shared between the caller and the business receiving the call. Charges to the caller are typically the amount of a local phone call with the receiver paying the usage rate. Shared cost numbers provide great coverage within country. While some domestic toll free or international toll free numbers may not be fully accessible in certain regions within a country like China, shared cost numbers provide full accessibility and availability through mobile and payphone.

## Vanity Number

As a variation of a UIFN or domestic toll free number, a vanity number carries the same coverage and restrictions as those types of toll free numbers. The added challenge is to identify and acquire just the right combination of numbers or words. Availability may be limited. Occasionally, ITFS numbers are available; however, the wait time and expense are generally excessive.



## HOW MUCH DO INTERNATIONAL TOLL FREE NUMBERS COST?

Three main factors affect the cost of an international toll free number:

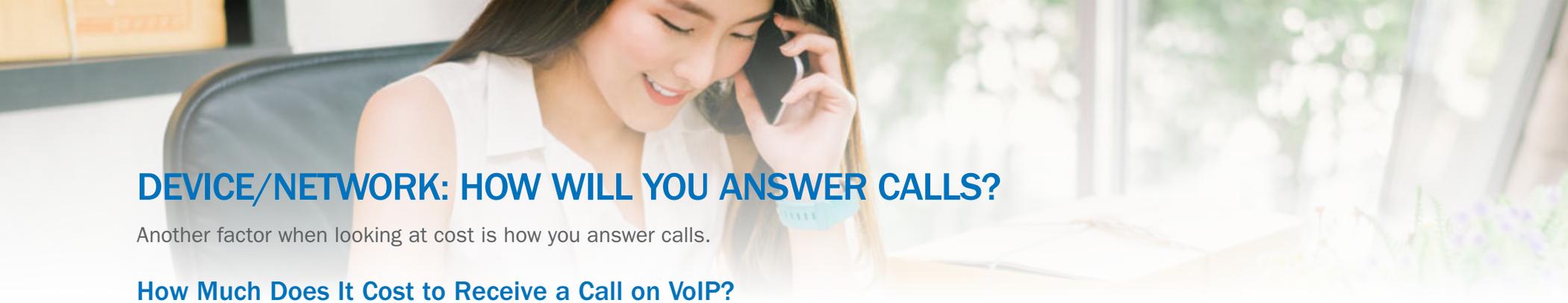
1. **Origination:** the country where the calls are coming from (i.e., the customer's location)
2. **Termination:** the country to which the calls will be forwarded (i.e., your business's location)
3. **Device/network:** How you will answer your calls (VoIP phone, mobile phone, landline, etc.)

### ORIGINATION: WHERE ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS LOCATED?

Your international toll free calls originate in the country where your customers are located. For example, if your customers are in Germany, you would purchase a Germany toll free number so those customers can call you toll free. Costs and originating rates per minute vary by country. Additionally, you can expect to pay more for a rare or hard-to-get international toll free numbers, like United Arab Emirate toll free numbers.

### TERMINATION: WHERE IS YOUR BUSINESS LOCATED?

Where you receive calls is the terminating country. Again, rates per minute vary based on the terminating country. For example, if a customer calls your Germany toll free number and the call forwards to a phone in the United Kingdom, the terminating rate per minute is slightly different than if it forwarded to a phone in the US.



## **DEVICE/NETWORK: HOW WILL YOU ANSWER CALLS?**

Another factor when looking at cost is how you answer calls.

### **How Much Does It Cost to Receive a Call on VoIP?**

You can receive VoIP calls through your Internet connection using a softphone. All you need is a laptop or desktop computer and a headset. Because the call doesn't go through traditional phone lines, calls forwarded via VoIP will always be cheaper than calls sent to a landline or mobile phone.

### **How Much Does It Cost to Receive a Call on a Landline?**

If you choose to send calls made to your toll free number to a landline, then the rate per minute will be higher. This is because the call will travel over the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to get to its destination. The phone company processing this call tacks on additional charges to handle the call.

### **How Much Does It Cost to Receive a Call on a Mobile Device?**

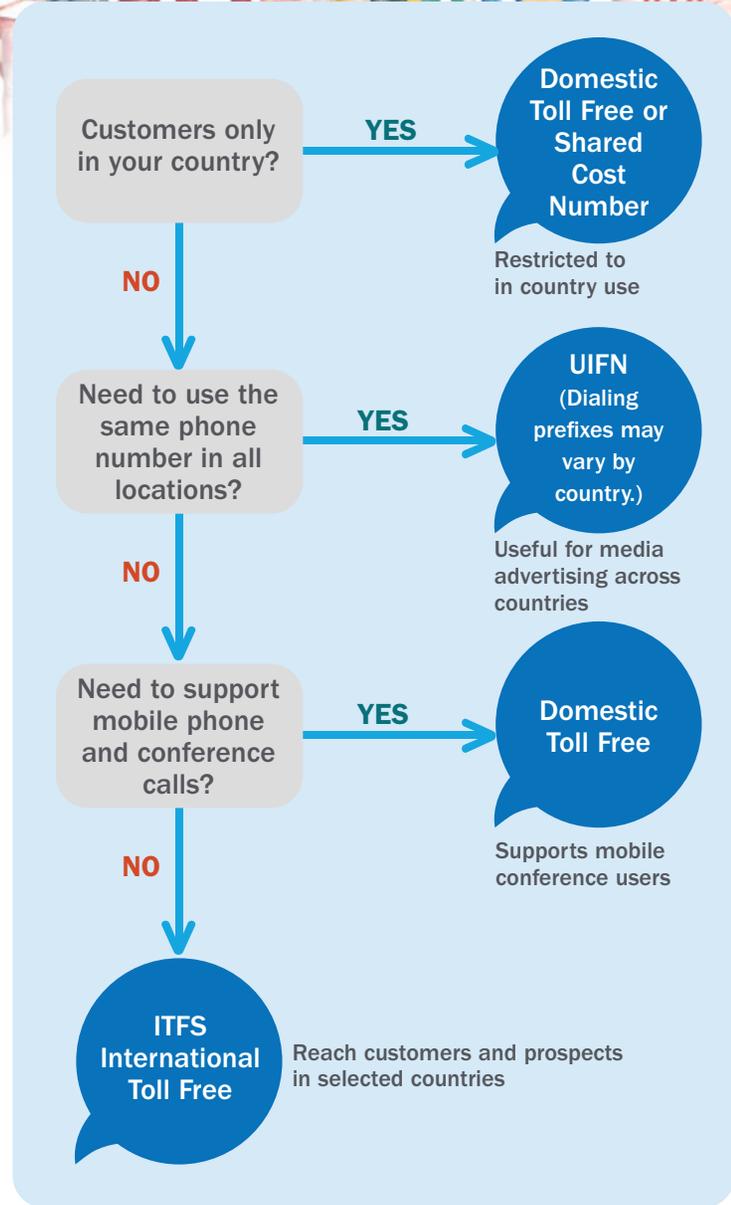
Calls forwarded to mobile devices cost more than those forwarded to VoIP. Mobile phone networks charge additional fees to process incoming toll free calls to your cell phone.

Additionally, costs vary based on coverage and restrictions in each country. Your provider can walk you through the details and help you plan.

# PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL SETUP

## YOUR NUMBERS CHECKLIST

- Identify type of number:
  - International toll free (ITFS)
  - Domestic toll free
  - UIFN
  - Shared cost
  - Vanity
- Country of origination: \_\_\_\_\_
- Country of termination: \_\_\_\_\_
- Device/network receiving calls:
  - VoIP/IP address/SIP trunk
  - Landline (fixed)
  - Mobile
- Restrictions/coverage: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number availability: \_\_\_ Hrs. \_\_\_ Days \_\_\_ Weeks \_\_\_ Months
- Number management:
  - Online portal/web browser accessible
  - Mobile app



International toll free numbers provide incredibly powerful tools for businesses that want to provide the same level of service to their customers globally as they do locally. Since coverage and restrictions vary by country, the diagram provides general information based on number type. For specifics, you need to discuss with your provider.



## SELECTING THE RIGHT PROVIDER

It helps to first identify your “must have,” “may have,” and “nice to have” business requirements before you compare vendors. Once you prioritize your business requirements, you’re ready to contact providers.

Note that providers use various carriers in their available covered countries. Not all providers have extensive global coverage and can have long wait lists for hard-to-get numbers.

To choose the provider that best meets your business requirements check each provider’s

- ✓ number availability,
- ✓ call management features,
- ✓ customer support accessibility, and
- ✓ escalation protocols.

Also, be sure to ask if select features are add-ons (at an additional charge) or part of the standard service.

# Ready to take the next step

Request additional information or [contact an AVOXI VoIP specialist](#) today to learn more about what type of International Toll Free Numbers best address your unique business needs:

+1 800.462.8694

+1 770.937.9735

[sales@avoxi.com](mailto:sales@avoxi.com)

## About AVOXI

AVOXI is a leading cloud communications provider delivering exceptional communications as a service (CaaS) solutions to customers around the world. Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. and with offices in Costa Rica, Jamaica, and South Africa, AVOXI offers Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services to international businesses spanning five continents.

The AVOXI portfolio of services includes: cloud-hosted virtual contact center solutions, cloud PBXs, SIP and IAX trunks, and hosted IVR and cloud telephony services. AVOXI is also proud to offer toll free numbers from more countries than any other telecommunications provider, as well as local phone numbers that provide businesses with a local presence in markets where they may not have a physical location.

For more information, visit: [www.avoxi.com](http://www.avoxi.com).

The logo features the word "AVOXI" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to its upper right. Below it, the tagline "because business is calling" is written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font. The entire logo is contained within a white speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. The background consists of a grey sky with white clouds at the top, a dark blue horizontal band with a lighter blue stripe in the middle, and a white bottom section.

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