Pros and Cons of Combined Voice and Data T1 Circuits

Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLECs) have been offering combined voice and data services over T1 lines for the last 5 years. On first look combining services seems like a cost effective solution for small to medium size businesses (SMB) needing both voice and data services. Unfortunately in the case of most SMBs, both services are "mission critical" to their daily business process.

Pros

1. Cost savings versus buying 2 separate T-1's, one for voice (if requiring over 12 lines) and one for data.

Cons

1. As reliable as T-1's are, if/when the circuit malfunctions the business will lose both "mission critical" services, leaving the business completely cut off from customers, vendors, and other locations.

2. Increased points of failure; facilities-based CLECs route voice traffic to their own centralized phone switch. Your phone call may need to pass through up to 30 central offices before getting routed to the public switched telephone network (PSTN). Verizon and authorized direct resellers put your calls directly on the PSTN from the local central office, thus eliminating points of failure. (See diagrams 1 and 2)

3. Once a business reaches the maximum amount of channels used for voice and data the business will need a second T-1 circuit for further expansion. Depending on local telephone facilities, adding a second circuit down the road may result in substantial installation delays. Additional equipment will also be required on customer PBX (2^{nd} T-1 port, generally not included with smaller PBX) and second data router. Separate voice and data T-1 provide capacity for future growth on current equipment.

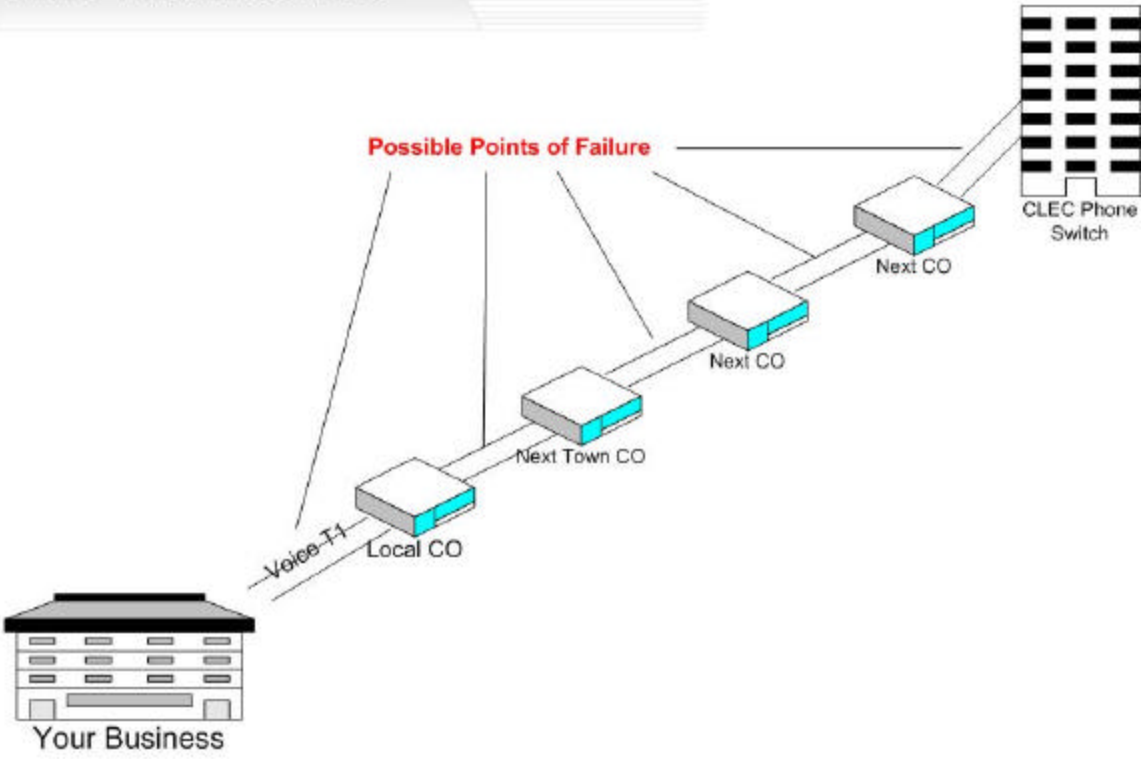
4. The integration of voice and data premise equipment necessary to provide both services over single T1 circuit increases the points of failure for both services.

5. Diagnosing problems on either service requires intrusive testing; this type of testing will interrupt both services.

6. With the rocky financials of today's integrated voice and data CLECs, should their business fail, their customers will be left without both services. Although it seems unlikely that a well-financed CLEC/ISP could fail, it happens, most recent failures of this type include Network Plus, CTC, Vitts, NorthPoint, Winstar, Espire, and many more.

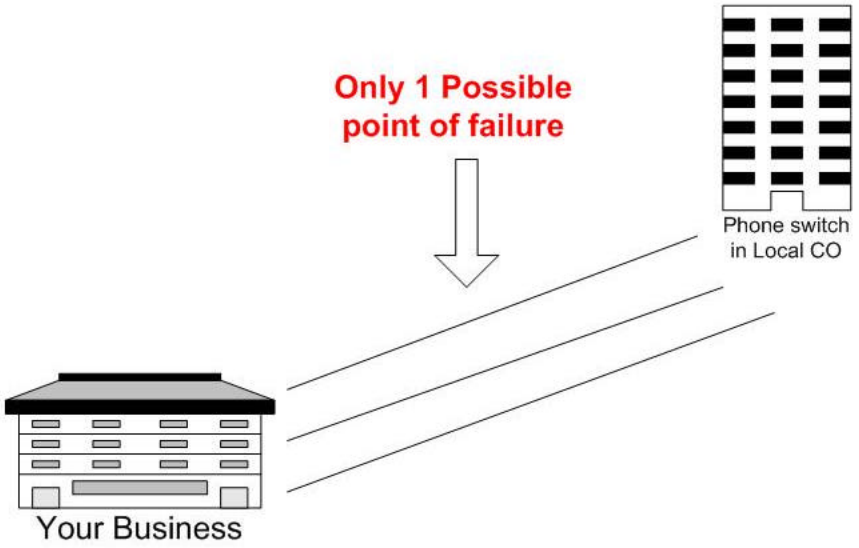
7. With the falling cost of voice services the overall savings is negligible.

CLEC Phone Service



By using a CLEC T1 for Voice you can have anywhere from 6 to 60 points of failure. You also can lose all of your lines due to 1 bad pair of copper.

Traditional Reliable Phone Service



By Keeping your phone lines on separate pairs of copper you protect your business.
If you have an issue with one copper pair you only lose one phone line not all of them.