

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

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Watching Crops Grow and Technology Change

*Jay Armstrong shares his perspective
from the vantage point of Armstrong Farms*


RainbowSM
COMMUNICATIONS

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BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

We're planting a seed in this *Business Connections* issue.

We're telling you about our Hosted PBX service, hoping this idea will take root and grow into a big improvement for your business.

We start on page 3 with reasons why you'll want to **Make Your Next Phone System a Hosted PBX**. These reasons include flexibility and scalability, and Hosted PBX is ideal for growing businesses of any size.

On pages 4 and 5, you'll find a **Business Spotlight on Armstrong Farms**. Jay Armstrong's roughly 3,000-acre farm is one of the largest in this area, and Rainbow Communications has provided services there since the crank phone days. We recently installed Hosted PBX, and you won't want to miss Jay's perspective on changing technology.

Speaking of which, **Technology Helps Small Businesses Grow Anywhere** as you'll discover on page 6. Services such as high-speed Internet over fiber allow business owners in rural areas to live where they want and still remain competitive. Then on page 7, our **Returning to Your Roots** article features CJ Hansen, owner of the Muscotah Mercantile and devoted fan of her hometown.

Rainbow Communications wants to help your business grow. We've planted the seed, now let's see what the future holds.

Sincerely,
Rainbow Communications
Business Solutions Team



L to R: Julie Bergman, Business Solution Specialist; Jerad Enneking, Business Solution Specialist; and Angie Kreider, Business Development Manager



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Make Your Next Phone System a **Hosted PBX**

It offers the flexibility to accommodate staff fluctuations and aids in business continuity



What kind of a phone system does your business currently use? Perhaps you have a few phone lines that connect to a key system or private branch exchange (PBX). Quite possibly, this on-site equipment was installed years ago and is starting to become a challenge to maintain. If so, you may want to reevaluate your phone needs and consider making the switch to Hosted PBX.

What is Hosted PBX?

Hosted PBX (also known as Virtual PBX, Hosted Voice, Virtual Voice, PBX in the Cloud, and Remote PBX) is a service provided by a telecommunications provider and hosted in the cloud. With Hosted PBX, the service provider owns, hosts, manages, and updates the handsets and system equipment in their network. This means a Hosted PBX subscriber doesn't have to purchase, set up, and house the equipment. Hosted PBX makes all the features and capabilities of a best-in-class unified communications system available without the need for an expensive upfront purchase.

Rainbow Communications offers Hosted PBX so your business can take advantage of this technology. Angie Kreider, Business Development Manager, notes, "Hosted PBX works for businesses of any size. Smaller businesses get easy and affordable access to phone capabilities previously only available to larger businesses. These advanced features include simultaneous ring, auto attendant, hunt groups, and music-on-hold."

Configure as Needed

The flexible, scalable infrastructure of Hosted PBX can easily grow as your business grows. Because it's a cloud-based system,

you can add new users without any capital charges or equipment upgrades. For example, your business can quickly add or remove seasonal workers to support changing needs.

Other popular features include:

- Simultaneous ringing that goes to the office phone and a cell phone.
- Web portals that enable end users and administrators to configure the service from their computers.

Maintain Calls After an Outage

Hosted PBX has superior disaster recovery attributes as compared to a premises-based system and can play an important role in business continuity planning. Since the PBX and other equipment resides in our secure facility with safeguards like back-up power, events at the business location such as a power outage would not prevent incoming calls. Users can quickly route their calls to an alternate location or mobile device, enabling business to proceed.

To discuss how Hosted PBX could benefit your business, call Rainbow Communications at 800-892-0163.

Armstrong Farms

Watching crops grow and technology change for generations



Jay Armstrong, Owner

Jay Armstrong is a fourth generation farmer and owner of Armstrong Farms, with close to 3,000 acres near Muscotah. He describes the business this way: “We mostly grow corn and soybeans with some wheat. The farm includes a retail location where we’ve sold Pioneer seed since 1939 as well as a grain elevator for personal use.”

Technology Keeps Evolving

In addition to a long history of farming with his father, uncle, and grandfather, Armstrong has a long history with Rainbow Communications. He says, “I can remember using old crank phones and having to go through the operator whenever you wanted to make a call. Those were the days of the party line, which was just about as entertaining as today’s Internet. It was a big deal in the early 1960s when our family got rotary phones and had a private phone line for the first time.”

Communications technology has changed dramatically in recent years, making a huge impact on farming as it has on every type of business. Armstrong explains, “It’s a whole new world now. We need Wi-Fi all across Armstrong Farm to provide Internet access to our outlying buildings. For example, we use bar codes for pricing and have tablets to sign invoices.”

Armstrong Farms currently gets Hosted PBX phone service, fiber Internet, and TV services from Rainbow Communications. Armstrong notes, “Through the decades, Rainbow Communications has kept up well with changing technology. For them to provide fiber optics here in our rural area is amazing. I belong to several national organizations, and when I tell people we have fiber here in Muscotah, their mouths drop. There are rural areas of the country served by big national providers that don’t have fiber. Rainbow Communications is a local co-op that’s invested well in technology. As customers, we don’t know how lucky we are.”

Lightning Leads to Hosted PBX

Until recently, Armstrong Farms had a traditional, on-site phone system. Then in July 2017, Rainbow Communications installed Hosted PBX. Why the switch? Armstrong replies, “I switched to Hosted PBX because our old phone system was struck by lightning multiple times. I got tired

of having to replace this equipment after lightning strikes, plus it was getting too old to have repairs done. So when Hosted PBX came along, it seemed like a good option. I now rent the equipment, which allows me to keep up with changing technology and phone improvement without the cost of ownership.”

Armstrong Farms has two Hosted PBX phones in the office for Armstrong and his secretary, two in his home, one in the shop, and one in the scale house. The system is all Windows based, and operations are done through a comportal on the screen.

“Through the decades, Rainbow Communications has kept up well with changing technology. For them to provide fiber optics here in our rural area is amazing.”

—JAY ARMSTRONG, OWNER, ARMSTRONG FARMS

“I’m still getting used to Hosted PBX. It reminds me a bit of when we first got smartphones and there were more features than we knew how to use. Rainbow Communications provided training, though, which helped, and they check back in with me regularly to make sure things are going well,” says Armstrong.

Timesaving Phone Features

He adds, “So far, one of the Hosted PBX features I like best is going to the contact list on my computer, clicking on a name, and it instantly places the call. Also, if I’ve been making calls to a certain company not in my contact list—such as when I’m calling looking for a part—I can just look at the phone log that’s provided with Hosted PBX.”

Armstrong is also enjoying the addition of voicemail, since this feature was not part of the old phone system. He notes, “We used to have to run to the nearest phone on the farm when it rang. Now, with Hosted PBX voicemail, our callers can leave a message. We don’t have to run anymore. We can just return calls later.”

Customer service matters to Armstrong, and he appreciates how Rainbow Communications treats him as a customer. “We had a minor glitch with the new Hosted PBX service, but when I called Rainbow Communications, they sent their top technician here to fix it right away. For them to be that responsive is what makes Rainbow Communications a gold standard for us.”



COULD HOSTED PBX BE RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

You want a reliable and efficient phone system to manage internal calls as well as stay connected to customers and suppliers. But you don’t want to have to think about it too much; you just want it to work so you can focus on your business.

If your business is considering a phone system upgrade, we urge you to consider Hosted PBX from Rainbow Communications. Angie Kreider, Business Development Manager, says, “Hosted PBX is adaptable to any size business, and is an especially beneficial service when you have offsite employees and/or multiple locations. It ties together the phones of all employees and enables internal transfers of calls between locations. Employees who work from home get access to the same phone features as those working at the office—all they need is a laptop and Internet connection.”

Kreider adds, “Rainbow Communications makes it easy to switch to Hosted PBX. There’s no big upfront investment, and we do a free inspection of wiring before installation. We also provide on-site training so employees get comfortable with the new system.”

Visit www.rainbowtel.net/business/hosted-pbx for more details.



Technology Helps Small Businesses **Grow Anywhere**

A big city isn't required to access big solutions

Just because a small business is located in a rural area, it doesn't mean it can't reach customers and resources from all over the world. Today's technology—from high-speed Internet over fiber to cloud-based solutions—offers the opportunity for the owners of these businesses to enjoy the best of both worlds. They can live and work in the small communities of their choice and still have access to the “big city” communications services required to work efficiently and remain competitive.

SCORE, a source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs and small businesses, suggests employing these strategies:

- **Use technology to connect with new markets, collaborators, and customers.** Cloud-based communication tools such as VoIP, Hosted PBX, online portals, and social networks help small businesses build stronger relationships and more satisfied customers. They also support the rise of the virtual workforce, allowing employees to work from home (or anywhere with an Internet connection).
- **Capitalize on technology's scalability and flexibility.** A small business that experiences a surge of orders, for example, can use pay-as-you-go cloud services to quickly scale to handle the traffic and prevent the website from crashing. Cloud services can also be easily downscaled when IT requirements change. The use of on-premise software and hardware is becoming less popular

due to the availability of cloud-based solutions such as Microsoft Office 365. These solutions offer greater scalability, security, efficiency, and flexibility than their on-premise counterparts.

- **Store data in the cloud.** The cloud is a safer, more secure place to store business data than on-premise servers. It also keeps small business owners and their computer networks from getting bogged down with files.

The massive growth of mobile is another important technology factor for small businesses to consider. StatCounter reports mobile usage was 42 percent in June 2017, up from 31 percent in June 2016. By contrast, desktop usage fell from 61 percent to 48 percent during the same period.¹ With more people accessing the web via mobile devices, small businesses should have a mobile-friendly version of their website and explore the use of mobile apps and mobile payments.

As a winner of the Smart Rural Community Award from NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, Rainbow Communications is well equipped to provide the broadband technology that small businesses in our rural service areas require. To discuss the specific needs of your small business, call Rainbow Communications at 800-892-0163.

¹<http://gs.statcounter.com/platform-market-share/desktop-mobile-tablet/united-states-of-america>



Returning to **Your Roots**

Muscotah native CJ Hansen returned in 2007 to support the people and place she loves

CJ Hansen grew up just west of Muscotah and graduated from Atchison County Community High School. She and her husband, Jeff Hansen, lived in Colorado for many years — most recently working as trim carpenters — but returned to Muscotah in 2007 so they could be closer to CJ's aging parents.

Both CJ and Jeff care deeply about Muscotah and want the little town to survive. Jeff started the Muscotah Rose Festival and turned the top of the old water tower into a giant baseball with white paint and red rebar “laces.” CJ joined two other women at the Muscotah Mercantile in 2010 and after they pulled out of the business, she became the sole proprietor in 2013. “I didn’t want to give up on the Muscotah Mercantile,” says CJ.

The Muscotah Mercantile was initially located in an old house in town, but moved to a new building on the highway, at 110 E 1st Street, in 2016. CJ says, “I received sizeable donations and a loan for the remainder needed to complete the new Muscotah Mercantile.” The red and white exterior pays homage to the town’s school colors, and the design has a barn feeling to it.

Down-home breakfasts and lunches are served at the Muscotah Mercantile, and the preparation for them starts early. CJ explains, “I

arrive at the store early in the morning to get the biscuits and gravy started, then I go home briefly and come back for the rest of the day.”

In addition to these meals, the Muscotah Mercantile also sells a few groceries and a selection of craft items. “Almost all of the crafts are locally made, and they include crocheted and knitted pieces, wood goods, and paintings sold on consignment as well as my own scroll work,” says CJ.

She adds, “I’m amazed by, and very grateful for, all the people who continue to support the Muscotah Mercantile. It’s a great feeling. People are always smiling and talking to each other, and we get visitors from all over the country. I plan to do my best, with help from my employees, to keep it going as a gathering place for our little town. I want Muscotah to stay on the map.”



Save Time and Money With Our **Hosted PBX Service**

- **Low up-front cost and set monthly expenses** – Pay for only what you need
- **End-to-end secure and reliable solution** – Superior disaster recovery compared to premises-based system
- **Flexible infrastructure that grows as you grow** – Seamless in-network feature upgrades
- **Allows you to focus on your business and not your phone system** – Rainbow Communications handles the maintenance and upgrades
- **Multiple device integrations with our downloadable apps** – Manage calls anywhere with an Internet connection
- **Easy management and administration from any browser** – Tailor calling features to individuals or groups
- **Unified Communications features** – Includes instant messaging, video chat, and presence (co-worker status) that integrates across all your devices