

# What caller ID are you allowed to display?

It is not uncommon for customers in this day and age to connect to several telephone networks simultaneously, for example Telkom and a VoIP provider.

While this architecture provides a host of benefits such as cost savings and increased redundancy, having multiple network providers may leave customers with a dilemma of either having to display a private number for outbound calls, or the Caller ID as issued by the VoIP provider - one that differs from their existing Incoming number which remains on the Telkom network.



Mitchell Barker

## Legislation surrounding resources

"Typically a business will receive calls on their primary network and make calls on its secondary network," says Mitchell Barker, CEO at WhichVoIP. "However, it is more prudent for obvious reasons to always echo the primary number out when using the secondary networks."

He says despite the fact that this makes sense, and is in fact common practice in the US and in Europe, it is illegal in South Africa.

"There is legislation governing the conditions of use of an allocation of the numbering resource," explains Dominic Cull at Ellipsis. "It clearly states that numbers are a national resource and are not owned by a person to whom they are allocated or assigned."

More specifically, the legislation prevents the use of 'inbound' number ranges, for outbound numbers, and furthermore prevents presentation of numbers by a 3rd party operator, and inaccurate numbers by the subscriber, he says.

## Conditions to adhere to

In addition, although a customer who has had a number legitimately assigned to them may enjoy the 'beneficial use of the number freely and without hindrance,' there are still several general conditions attached, including that the allocation has to be used for the purpose specified in the application, and must be controlled by the original applicant. Moreover, assigned numbers cannot be traded, and a provider is not allowed to make use of numbers that have not been allocated to them.

"Most companies don't think twice about the numbers their service provider has allocated them - and even fewer consider the legal ramifications of using one number across multiple networks. However, with the increasing number of VoIP providers and services available, what may seem like good business practice in sticking to one telephone number while using the efficiencies offered by IP telephony may well place your business on the wrong side of the law," Barker points out. "Companies need to be aware of this, and avoid falling foul of ICASA by flouting the regulations."