Kerio Operator 2.5.3

A versatile and easily virtualised software IP PBX that offers a ton of VoIP features for the price
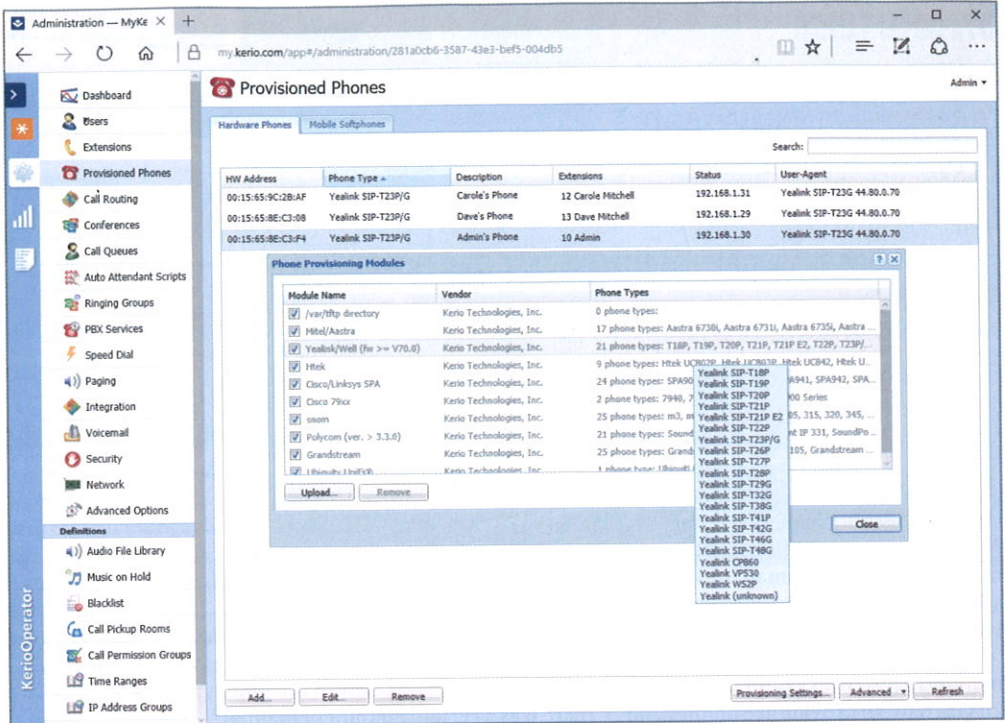
SCORE ★★★★☆

PRICE From £252 exc VAT
from kerio.com

ABOVE Kerio provides an extensive range of IP phone profiles to help with auto-provisioning

I f you're looking for a versatile on-premises IP PBX, Kerio's Operator is a great choice. You can buy it preinstalled on Kerio's little v300 appliance, or as a Linux-based software platform, which is what we tried. It's supplied as an ISO file and has very modest system requirements, so can easily be installed in a virtual environment. VMware fans can even download an OVF file straight from Kerio's website, but we opted to install the ISO on a Hyper-V host.

Creating a Hyper-V VM and loading the software took 15 minutes, after which plenty of management options were offered. You can access these by pointing a browser directly at the VoIP server, or register the appliance with a MyKerio cloud management account and control things from there. The web dashboard uses customisable widgets, showing details such as CPU and memory utilisation, software status, active calls, recent call history and the event log. There's also a page for full details on active calls and call history, plus another for all logs.

To take advantage of Operator's auto-provisioning capabilities, you'll need a DHCP server with option 66 enabled, and pointing at the appliance for TFTP services. The software comes with a number of auto-provisioning profiles, and can automatically assign extension numbers to new IP phones as they're discovered. In our tests, we manually provisioned our Yealink T23P phones by setting up extensions and dishing them out to users. To do this, we simply had to enter each phone's MAC address, choose the appropriate Yealink profile and assign an extension number to each one.

We then hooked up the IP PBX to our Sipgate SIP trunk account from the console's Call Routing section. This only took a few seconds, although we also had to edit the interface profile and enter our SIP ID in the default outgoing "From" header before we could make outgoing calls.

Considering its low starting price, Kerio's call-handling features are impressive. Call queues can be used to distribute calls to active users or agents: Operator has six handling schemes, including ring in order, ring all, round robin and least busy.

You can also add a touch of professionalism with auto-attendant scripts, which can present callers with a menu of options for different departments. The scripting system is very powerful, allowing you to create multi-level menus with custom voice messages to help guide callers to the right extension within a department.

Voicemail options are equally good, and require little configuration. Default inboxes and PINs are set up automatically for users when they are created; they can then manage voicemail directly from their phones, and if an email address has been set up in their profile, they'll receive messages as audio attachments too.

Kerio provides free softphone software for Windows, macOS and Linux, which was recently spruced up with support for video calls. The Windows softphone presents a very tidy interface, showing a log of the latest calls received and sent, along with missed calls, voicemail information, speed-dial shortcuts and options to make voice or video calls. Furthermore, there are iOS and Android apps, which provide a similar level of access but cost £2.99 and £3.99 per user respectively. If you don't want to install any software at all, you can also use the Operator web portal: we found this to be as well-featured as the Windows softphone, but video calls are only supported in Chrome and Firefox.

In short, Kerio Operator has a lot going for it. It can be deployed on a wide range of real or virtual hardware, installation is reasonably easy, call-handling features are up with the best – and it's also very good value.

"The scripting system is very powerful, allowing you to create multi-level menus with custom voice messages to guide callers"

PC PRO RECOMMENDED

LEFT We had no problems running Operator as a Hyper-V VM and managing it via our MyKerio cloud account