STIR/SHAKEN: How GigTel Drastically Reduces Robocalls by Supporting STIR/SHAKEN Standards

Unwanted robocalls can be a nuisance and, in many cases, a threat.

Have you ever picked up a call because the caller id suggested it was a local caller or an important organization? Did it turn out to be a robocall with an "urgent" message about your recent purchase, an offer to extend your car's warranty or a notification that your bank account may have been hacked? Then you've had first-hand experience with a number-spoofing spam call.

Worldwide, individuals received 31.3 billion spam calls between January and October of 2020, up from 26 billion during the same period in 2019. These calls can be damaging to businesses and consumers alike. Spam calls increase the liability of getting scammed, take valuable time away from genuine callers, and disrupt the workflow for employees.

But here's the real problem: businesses can't afford to ignore calls. That's because, among the relentless barrage of robocalls, some of these calls are legitimate. From appointment reminders to customer inquiries and spontaneous calls from a colleague, ignoring calls can cost businesses millions.

Introducing STIR/SHAKEN

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) mandates that phone service providers use the new STIR/SHAKEN caller ID standards to protect users from these masquerading robocallers. When fully deployed in 2021, the mandate ensures that carriers may work together to identify calls where the caller ID doesn't match where the call originates. Providers using this framework can automatically block such calls.

When it comes to mitigating fraudulent robocalls and unlawful caller ID spoofing aimed at scamming businesses and individuals, GigTel has your back. We are pleased to share that STIR/SHAKEN is in place for all customers. This document and FAQs provide information about STIR/SHAKEN and its meaning for our users.

Key Stats

1.3K Robocalls per second
— nearly 60 calls per month per person

$29.3B
Amount consumers lost to phone scams in 2019 according to FTC Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book

70%
Percentage of consumers who won't answer a call if they don't recognize the number as noted on a Consumer Reports Survey

74%
Percentage of fraud activity which took place via phone calls in 2019 uncovered by FTC Sentinel Network Data Book

Highlights

- Businesses use robocalls for various legitimate reasons, but bad actors have created a global aversion to picking up unknown numbers.
- STIR/SHAKEN, a spam call prevention framework, aims to authenticate calls and notify users before they answer the phone.
- Using STIR/SHAKEN and our analytics-based robocall detection, we inform GigTel users with "Suspected Robocall" as the caller ID when a spam call is detected.

As new rules go into effect, GigTel users can rest assured that we are fully compliant with the STIR/SHAKEN regulation. We're taking all the necessary steps to reduce robocalls and ensure that our customers have the tools they need to identify the calls they wish to answer. Please read our Frequently Asked Questions or view the FCC's Fact Sheet for more information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is STIR/SHAKEN?

Both "STIR" and "SHAKEN" are acronyms.

STIR stands for Secure Telephone Identity Revisited. At a high level, STIR provides the ability within SIP to authenticate Caller ID.

SHAKEN stands for Signature-based Handling of Asserted information using toKENs, and it defines the end-to-end architecture to implement caller ID authentication using STIR in the telephone network.

The new set of protocols provides a way for voice service providers to "sign" caller ID as legitimate on outbound calls and identify inbound calls with a spoofed caller ID. Together, these processes enable phone providers to "attest" to where calls are coming from and "authenticate" those signatures to let the recipient know when a call has been verified.

Why is STIR/SHAKEN required?

The FCC has pressed telecommunications providers to address robocalling, scam calls, and unwanted telemarketing calls. One tactic used by these callers is to spoof the originating telephone number to make the call appear that it is from a number that the call recipient is more likely to answer (e.g., make it look like the call is from the recipient's local area). With STIR/SHAKEN, voice providers can validate whether incoming calls originated by the displayed originating number.

How does the STIR/SHAKEN mandate work?

STIR/SHAKEN standards give phone service providers a roadmap toward a common digital language. This allows the networks to improve the quality of caller ID information so they can pass along calls from authentic users and block the suspicious ones.

Are there levels of attestation?

Yes. There are three levels:

A-level attestation: The service provider has verified both the origination of a call and that the user/extension number is authorized to use the number.

B-level attestation: The service provider has authenticated the call origination but cannot verify that the caller is authorized to use the calling number.

C-Level attestation: The service provider has originated the call on the network but cannot authenticate the call source.

What is GigTel doing about STIR/SHAKEN?

In April 2021, the FCC set up the Robocall Mitigation Database, where phone service providers file details about their implementation of the STIR/SHAKEN caller ID authentication framework. They had until June 30 to register and tell the FCC about their progress on implementing STIR/SHAKEN standards. GigTel, as part of parent company Endeavor Communications, was among the 1,500 providers who filed their data in the Robocall Mitigation Database by the September 2021 deadline. As of the September deadline, GigTel and other network providers must refuse calls from providers who didn't register with the FCC.

Our system signs all calls originating on the GigTel network and verifies STIR/SHAKEN headers on all inbound calls (A-level attestation).

What does this mean for GigTel's business and residential users?

For inbound calls, the STIR/SHAKEN protocol means you'll be able to determine whether the inbound phone number has been authenticated before answering. If it's not, your phone will show "Suspected Robocall" as the caller ID.
You don't have to do anything to ensure that your outbound calls are compliant and appropriately signed. We handle all of that for you.

How will this impact my outbound calls?

As your outbound calls on GigTel's service are signed under STIR/SHAKEN, your calls should not be treated as non-authenticated or blocked by the voice service provider on the receiving end based on lack of STIR/SHAKEN authentication. However, the FCC has also allowed voice service providers to label or block likely robocalls or unwanted traffic by default based on any reasonable analytics. Thus, a receiving voice service provider may still mark a call that it receives as likely spam or block it even if the originating call is signed under STIR/SHAKEN. If you believe that a receiving voice service provider is mislabeling your outbound calls as likely spam or blocking them, let us know by contacting GigTel Support.

What happens next?

GigTel has completed its implementation of STIR/SHAKEN and filed its certification of STIR/SHAKEN compliance in the FCC's Robocall Mitigation Database. Per the mandate, GigTel only transfers calls to providers who have filed a certificate of STIR/SHAKEN compliance with the FCC. GigTel customers do not see any changes in the ways their calls are routed or completed, and there's no action required for all calls to be attested. Similarly, there has been no change in experience for users calling from the GigTel app to another GigTel user.

However, it's important to note that incoming calls made via a carrier that has not fully implemented STIR/SHAKEN may not be verified, even if a call is legitimate. Additionally, many small voice providers (100,000 or fewer voice service subscriber lines) have not yet met guidelines and have been granted an extension to meet the requirements. To learn more, download the FCC's Fourth Report and Order. Adopted and released in December of 2021, it grants certain providers an extension to file certifications. GigTel offers a service that enables these voice providers to meet compliance without investing in new infrastructure.

Will all robocalls end?

Unfortunately, no. However, STIR/SHAKEN standards are expected to significantly reduce the number of robocalls. Keep in mind that STIR/SHAKEN is only targeted at removing those number-spoofing robocallers who pretend to be someone you want to talk to. Many robocalls are perfectly legal and will continue to occur, e.g., the Federal Trade Commission allows political robocalls about candidates running for office, charities seeking donations, or companies that have your written permission to be contacted by robocalls. Additionally, it's important to note that bad robocallers can use small network providers, and many of them have been granted extensions on meeting the STIR/SHAKEN deadlines.

Although STIR/SHAKEN legislation and advanced call blocking tools will help reduce fraudulent robocalls, the FCC still encourages you to remain vigilant against scammers. For example, avoid answering calls from numbers you don't recognize and never give personal information to someone who called you. Get more tips from the FCC.