Straight Talk about Business Phone Systems

Choosing the Right Solution for How Your Business Works Today

Customers still prefer the phone as the best way to contact your business.*

48% Phone

28% In-person visit 10% Email

8% Fax

5% Social Media 1% Web chat

*Software Advice Survey, 2015

DID YOU KNOW?

Is Your Phone System Good for Business?

Most business phone systems can last 10 to 15 years or longer. The problem is those systems are working the way they were designed to work ... 10 to 15 years ago. So while your phones still ring, they may not be providing the functionality for how your business works today. To meet your customers' needs and expectations, you need a phone system that matches the way business works now — not at the turn of the last millennium.

We've all seen how the Internet has changed the way consumers interact with businesses. Your customers want to connect with you from anywhere, at any time, through the web and their mobile devices, using voice, chat, or text messaging.

The same system that makes it easy for customers to connect with you should also make it easy for your employees to respond to them, whether from their desks, remote locations, or via their own smartphones or tablets. It should help your employees be more efficient and productive by streamlining routine business workflows.

Most of all, choosing and implementing the right phone system for the way your business works today should be simple — simple to set up, simple to manage and maintain, and most of all, simple to use. Vendors and sales reps sometimes speak in technical jargon that makes your head spin: Do you want an on-site system?

A hosted, cloud-based solution? Analog, digital, or VoIP? All good questions, but it doesn't have to be so complicated.

Today's advanced business communications solutions are, thankfully, definitely not your grandfather's phone system — otherwise, we'd all still be chained to our desks using

rotary phones! But before you decide on a new phone system, you need to know how your current system is operating — or isn't. Let's start with the basics. You need to ask yourself why you're considering replacing your phone system. Is it because of ...

° Its age? * Rising communications expenses?

* Increasing maintenance issues and costs?

° Lack of features? * Inability to grow with your business? All of the above?

A “yes” to any of these questions is a good reason — and sign — it’s time to replace your phone system. Once you've determined why, it’s important to identify how your communications investment can enhance the operations and processes your business repeats hundreds, or maybe thousands of times each day. In other words, it’s all about enhancing existing workflows and creating new, more efficient workflows using your phone system.

Assess System User Needs

Depending on the size of your business, who ultimately signs the check for a new phone system may vary. But wherever and whenever possible, we recommend the decision-making process begin with the appointment of an assessment team to ensure the entire organization's needs are considered.

The assessment team should evaluate input from key business unit leaders and executives, remote and/or mobile system users, administrative staff, and, of course, IT. Input from your business unit leaders is particularly

Assess the needs of system users

Consider hard and hidden P costs

Evaluate the features you need

Protect your investment important. Tasked with increasing revenue, reducing expenses and improving overall efficiencies, they understand the processes, or workflows, that make each unit run — and where and why things may not flow as smoothly as they should.

Armed with this input, the assessment team can identify and communicate to your technical people and other decision-makers the challenges your employees — and the business as a whole — are trying to overcome to ensure the phone system you ultimately choose addresses them. This guide can also help the decision-making team:

Partner with the right vendor

Determine whether you need to upgrade or replace your system

Should You Upgrade or Replace?

Once a needs assessment is complete, you'll have a good baseline from which to start and determine if you really need to replace your entire system. Often, you can save money by selecting a vendor that offers a hybrid (TDM/IP) solution that’s compatible with your existing analog, digital, VoIP, and/or other legacy networks and phones. This allows for a simpler and less expensive upgrade rather than having to “rip and replace” everything you already have.

A hybrid phone system using both digital and IP technologies can eliminate the need to “rip and replace” your existing system, with the ability to retain digital phones and easily migrate to the latest IP and cloud services.

With a hybrid platform to build on, as your business grows, you can also easily and more cost effectively migrate to more advanced features — such as evolving cloud-based services — when you need them.

We strongly recommend you always begin with evaluating how any communications solution will support the way your business works. Once you've taken stock of where you are, you can begin to evaluate the features you need.

DID YOU KNOW?

5 SIGNS IT’S TIME TO UPGRADE YOUR PHONE SYSTEM

It provides limited options for customers to connect with you, resulting in long hold times.

It goes down with no backup or failover protection, leaving your business dead in the water.

It doesn’t support multiple locations and remote or mobile workers.

It doesn’t support chat, video, IM, or evolving cloud-based services.

It’s complicated and expensive to add new phones or features.

What Features Do You Need?

Now it's time to look at specific features you'll need in your new phone system. Not many businesses can function with just the basic call forwarding, on-hold and call transfer features found in earlier systems. With all the options available in today's advanced phone systems, the line between what you'd “like” versus what you “need” can quickly become blurred — and costly. Also, you want to make sure you select a feature set that’s intuitive and easy to use, with little or no training time so your employees can be on the phone and productive as soon as the system is installed.

To simplify figuring out which features you really need — and save some money in the process — remember, it’s all about the workflows.

Today's advanced communications systems are designed to help enhance and automate natural business workflows to save you time, increase productivity, and, ultimately, increase business revenues. When evaluating your system's feature set, think about all the everyday, repetitive processes that go on in your business. In a medical office or an auto dealership, for instance, how much time is spent on making and confirming appointment reminders and service calls? In any business, how much time is wasted because employees' mobile devices don't integrate with your current phone system? Many of today's business phone systems can integrate mobile devices (corporate or employee-owned) for corporate chat, presence, call recording, employee directories, etc.

Automating routine business workflows saves money and time. If you save 2 minutes on a workflow that is repeated 200 times a day in one office and you have 500 offices, that's 139 days of increased productivity!

DID YOU KNOW?

Recommended features for CLOUD MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS enhancing workflows INTELLIGENCE & CRM INTEGRATION

With the goal of simplifying communications and enhancing your business workflows—all while reducing your overall communications costs— these suggestions can help you determine which "must have" features you'll need in a new phone system.

e° MOBILITY

PAPO eed

Pere - 200 Sc30a55e1 5 -

29095, ?

er

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEMS 5

Look for a system that offers intuitive, easy-to-use features that enhance your business workflows and improve customer service, including:

* Easy access to voice calls, messaging, one-click meetings and collaboration via web, mobile, desk and softphones

* Real-time user status (presence) across all devices, in or out of the office

* Advanced call routing based on real-time caller data lookup and customized customer routing rules

¢ Screen-popped caller information

* Integration with your existing customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, and other business databases

* Instant messaging (IM) * Audio, video and web conferencing

* IVR applications to create inbound/outbound surveys, appointment reminders and more

* Contact center functionality for internal work groups * System-wide and targeted paging and broadcast messages * Call recording with call storage and retrieval

* — Integration with email servers to receive, forward and save faxes as email attachments

Look for functionality and capabilities that support a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) work environment, enable enterprise mobility and ensure secure mobile communications with features including:

* Access to all enterprise phone system features and functionality from mobile devices through a single interface over any WiFi or cellular channel

* Logging and routing of all business communications inside and outside your firewall through your corporate network

* Virtual private network (VPN) support for secure, encrypted voice calls, IMs and data

* Call quality monitoring and network switching to ensure consistent call quality

* Hot desking, so multiple workers can use a single physical work station (including computer, phone, etc.) during different time periods

To ensure business continuity in case of outages and to easily manage your system, be sure to build in system security and simplified administration features, such as: * Centralized administration to connect multiple sites and perform diagnostics on a single system or network-wide, remotely or on-site

* Disk imaging-based system restoration to get back to business fast after scheduled or unscheduled downtime

* Cloud-based access to automatic system updates

* Customizable emergency Caller ID to improve safety and emergency response times

* Automation of routine backups and software upgrades

* Collection and analysis of system call details for enterprise and drill-down reporting

° DIY moves, additions and changes * Custom application development

To save money and eliminate recurring, outside and escalating communications costs, consider a system with capabilities and features such as:

* Support for SIP trunking ¢ Simplified licensing structure * Marketing campaign tracking and reporting

10 QUESTIONS TO HELP FIND THE PHONE FEATURES YOU NEED

‘ 3 1 Do yOG f How many 4 bs) Set | _ offices/locations How many staff to administer Fen do you have? nat aan ih remote or mobile and maintain your : ata ewer employees do

? phone system? ~* you have? you have? Z 7 # NS

Do you have IT

: Do you use 8 9 6 » | audio/video 10 How much do you How many expect to grow in calls do you get How do next 2-5 years? each day?

What are your » | conferencing? monthly communications you track costs? calls?

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEMS 7

VoIP uses your Internet connection for calls vs. tradi- tional land lines to save a business a bundle:

Up to 40% for local calls

Up to 90% on international calls Up to 90% on initial start-up costs‘

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bottom Line: What's It All Going to Cost?

Your phone system is one of the most important investments you'll make in your business. There are many options and things to think about when it comes to the cost of a phone system:

¢ Should you lease or buy?

* Do you want it as a CAPEX or OPEX on your balance sheet?

* Have you considered ongoing maintenance costs?

¢ What about flexible pricing models?

There's a great business case to be made for investing in today’s advanced communications solutions thanks to the greater cost savings realized by using VoIP, cloud and other evolving technologies. Options for taking advantage of these technologies include investing in on-site, cloud and/ or hybrid solutions. Working with a professional, trusted vendor to assess all your options will also help you determine what many businesses fail to compute — the total cost of ownership over the life of the system you choose.

Owning your own on-site system

On-site, or premise-based, phone systems give you complete control of your communications, but usually at a higher cost. In adddition to purchasing and maintaining

all of the phone equipment, you may also have to hire IT staff to manage the system, including ongoing upgrades and maintaining the system’s database.'

On the plus side, new technology is out there that can help you save significantly in operating an on-site system. One such technology is SIP trunking, which allows you to move your phone calls from your phone lines to your data network. If you have multiple locations, SIP trunking allows you to provide capacity for your locations as a whole rather than for each individual office or site. Depending on the size of the business, S/P trunking can save, on average, 30% to 60% on monthly communications costs, and reduce the number of phone lines you need by one-third to one-half.”

Calling in the cloud

What about the cloud? Cloud-based solutions allow you to scale easily and quickly as your business grows. They can simplify phone system deployment and day-to-day management, as well as support. With a cloud-based system, you pay a monthly subscription fee to the vendor providing the service. The cost benefits of cloud-based systems include:$

* Lower CAPEX and predictable OPEX costs

* Reduced costs for associated applications (audio/web/video conferencing, fax, call recording, etc.)

* Reduced risk of technology obsolescence and sunk costs

* Elimination of system redundancy expenditures

* Reduced IT personnel needed to manage cloud services

On the down side, you lose local control of your system, plus you have ongoing monthly fees to pay which can vary depending on the number of users, making it harder to budget and control costs.

“Rip & replacing” instead of saving money by utilizing existing system equipment.

Choosing a system that doesn’t integrate with CRMs and other business systems to improve workflows.

Missing hidden costs such as additional s license fees or hardware expenses.

Ignoring user demand foraBYOD % work environment. RR ee

Bypassing system security features and failover solutions.

“Nickle & diming” so you end up with incompatible components from different vendors.

COMMON MISTAKES WHEN BUYING

A PHONE

SYSTEM

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEMS 9

Partnering For Success: Choosing the Right Phone System Vendor

After you've taken stock of your current situation, considered the features you need today and in the future, and determined which type of solution will work best for your business, it’s time to find the right vendor to help you find the right phone system that:

* Is simple to deploy, manage and use;

* Addresses and enhances business processes and workflows; * Streamlines communications with your customers;

* Meets the needs of the mobile workplace; and

* Will grow along with your business for years to come.

It's especially important to find a trusted partner who will work with and advise you on how to choose the optimal solution for the way your business works. You need a vendor who can not only provide you with the right phone system, but a partner who will support you through system installation, deployment, management and service after the sale.

eo oe? ° e o *

Before you make a final decision

What else should you consider when looking at vendors? Look at the selection process as you would if you were hiring a key employee. To make sure you're working with a strategic partner, not just a vendor who will sell you a system and then disappear, think about:

How will your system be deployed? One-time cut-over or phased roll-out? Do you have IT staff to deploy and manage the system? If not, consider a vendor who offers managed services to you need ik? 9 handle every aspect of system eeoeevoevoevoeeeseee? ee eee eee & & @ PS installation and management for you if you lack in-house resources.

Does the vendor ask about your business needs first, or do they start talking about what you need before understanding why

Does the vendor

; offer any type 1) of investment

How protection knowledgeable plan so you is the vendor can manage on evolving and control all technologies costs associated impacting with your phone communica- system over a tions?

guaranteed period of time?

oeooeeoeeeeeeeeeeee @ eeoeoeoeeevseeeeeeeeteeee @ @ e

Are training, service and maintenance included with the sale of your system?

eseeeeese

Is the vendor a one-stop, single-source provider? Multiple products from multiple vendors mean more troubleshooting, problem- solving, headaches, time and cost.

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEMS 11

1 Matrix Networks. (Nov. 6, 2015). “On Premise UC: What Does it Mean and How Much Does it Cost?” http://www.mtrx.com/blog/on-premise-uc- what-does-it-mean-and-how-much-does-it-cost

2 Vertical Communications. lan. 25, 2016). “Retailers: A Million (or 2) Reasons Consolidated SIP Should Be a 2016 Priority.’ http://blog.vertical. com/a-million-or-2-reasons-consolidated-sip-should-be-a-201 6-priority

3 Frost & Sullivan. (2015) “The Compelling Business Case for Cloud Communications: A Detailed Assessment of the ROI/TCO Benefits of Cloud UCC and Contact Center.’ http://sims.8x8.com/ Documents/711492_1_Frost_%26_Sullivan_-_The_Compelling_ Business_Case_for_Cloud_Communications.pdf

4 BeBusinessed.com. (Feb. 17, 2016). “Numbers Don't Lie: Impressive Stats of VoIP” http://bebusinessed.com/voip/numbers-dont-lie-impressive- stats-of-voip/

Follow us:

COMMUNICATIONS www.atscommunications.com 2500 Annalisa Drive, Ste. 200, Concord, CA 94520

4 P Toll Free: (800) 995-4287 A vertical Prone: (25) 00-000

COMMUNICATIONS Fax: (925) 602-1510

© 2016 Vertical Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. Vertical Communications and the Vertical Communications logo and combinations thereof, Wave IP, Vertical Summit, and SBX IP, are registered trademarks of Vertical Communications, Inc. All other brand and product names are used for identification only and are the property of their respective holders.