



THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO:

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST
PHONE SYSTEM FOR YOUR
BUSINESS

PREPARED BY



Meeting Tree
COMPUTER



GOOD NEWS! YOU HAVE LOTS OF OPTIONS

A business phone line not working can trigger a chain of events that ends in a complete disaster.

Existing customers can't get in touch with customer service to get their problem resolved, resulting in a slew of complaints and negative reviews, and in the end — a damaged reputation.

Prospective customers can't call your sales team to make inquiries resulting in lost sales. Your sales team can't receive incoming calls or make outgoing calls. You haven't set up voicemails or call forwarding.

When you're running a business, you can't afford to have an outage of this type.

Fortunately, there is some good news: You Have A Lot Of Options!

Thanks to Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) and ever-improving cloud technologies, the options available to you as a small (or big!) business are plentiful, with more features at a lower cost than were available the last time you went shopping for a phone system.



However, with all the options and dozens of vendors, separating the good from the bad and navigating the marketing hype can be difficult. Not only are some VoIP systems a complete waste of money for a business environment, but fees can be “hidden,” so what appears to be a big cost-saving decision initially can end up costing you more in the long run once you’ve calculated in ALL costs over a 1- to 3-year period.

Additionally, if not designed, implemented, and supported properly, VoIP phone systems can be extremely problematic and can be MORE expensive than a traditional phone system, depending on your specific situation.

Buyer Beware!

Saving money on your phone bill should not be your only criteria when considering a VoIP phone system for 2 important reasons.

First, dropped calls and poor sound quality will frustrate you and cause prospects to hang up and call your competition – so you might save some money on your phone bill, but you LOSE customers and sales. Definitely NOT a good trade-off.

Second, make sure you look at the total cost of ownership (TCO), not just the savings on your phone bill, which is what almost every VoIP salesperson focuses on. While it’s not the norm, there are certain cases where VoIP may actually cost you MORE than a traditional phone system because of the features and costs your VoIP vendor adds on, negating any savings on your phone bill.

WHAT IS VOIP AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

VoIP is an overused term that confuses a lot of people. They think it's a phone on your computer, a software application, or a physical phone you plug into your PC.

Those all were the early iterations of VoIP. Today, a "VoIP" phone is more of a SERVICE than a physical phone (although physical phones still play into this). With a VoIP service, you can use any cell phone, your PC, or other devices to make calls and send messages, which gives you the ability to make and receive calls from any location with a reasonable Internet connection.

Sounds like a dream come true, right? Yet many people have a fear of moving to a VoIP for two reasons. The first is call quality and the second is "What if the Internet goes down?"

So, let me address both of those valid concerns and why with the RIGHT phone, this is not an issue.



PROBLEM #1

CALL QUALITY



Problem #1: Call Quality

It's true that in the past, VoIP phones have been notorious for garbled, choppy, low-quality sound and dropped calls. However, the technology that operates these phones has come a long way in the last couple of years, and Internet bandwidth (which is a key component to call quality) is faster and cheaper.

Any sound quality issues you might have on a new VoIP system are mostly due to two problems – your bandwidth isn't sufficient, or your firewall, router, and computer network (where the phone now resides) are not set up properly for the phone.

That's it.

This is why it's critical for your phone vendor to assess your network before selling you a phone to make sure the phone you're buying will actually work on the network you're plugging it into.

KEY POINT:

Big phone vendors like AT&T or RingCentral will NOT do this assessment before selling you a phone. They will take your money, ship you a phone in a box, and leave you to set it up. When the call quality is horrible and you call them for help, they'll simply point the finger at your Internet provider, bandwidth, or computer network and wish you good luck. They WON'T troubleshoot that issue for you, which is why you want to buy a phone system from a local IT company that will own 100% of the setup, problems, and call quality.

PROBLEM #2

WHAT IF THE INTERNET GOES DOWN?



Problem #2: What If The Internet Goes Down?

Without a doubt, the internet WILL go down, but that doesn't mean your phone system has to. That's because the "brain" of your phone is not hosted in your office. It's hosted in a secure and highly-reliable server that has multiple backup systems for internet connectivity.

Therefore, when your local Internet goes down, you can have the phone automatically set up to do a number of things, such as:

- Route to a designated cell phone or other location.
- Go to an auto-attendant you set up to allow the person to leave a voice mail, similar to your after-hours call system.
- They can leave a voice mail, and that voice mail can be e-mailed to you.

A good phone system vendor will set this up in advance, so calls are automatically handled the way you want and instantly “failover” without you having to do anything.

Two Critical Questions To Ask About Support BEFORE You Buy:

1. Who will set my new phone system up and customize it for my specific needs and situation?

Get specifics here. Some vendors simply ship you a phone and require you to set it up yourself. Sure, they'll tell you all you have to do is "plug it in," but rarely is anything that easy. Instead of doing it for you, they'll give you the 100-page instruction manual you'll need to muddle through and a "customer support" website that will require you to search through hundreds of questions to find the answer to your specific problem, which is time consuming and frustrating. Rarely do these sites provide the answers you need quickly.

Then the day of the cut over, you're scrambling to make the system work, frantically trying to figure out how to troubleshoot it and set it up.

Worse yet - if you CAN'T get it to work and you CAN'T get it to do what you want it to do, exactly how will they help you? Do they have local techs who will come to your office and set it up? Troubleshoot it? This brings me to the next question...

2. How do I get help if the phone system isn't working or I can't get it to do what we need it to do?

As outlined above, we all know how exasperating it is to try and get a "customer service" person to help from a big, nameless, faceless corporation.

So, we recommend you look for a reputable, local phone system reseller, who will not only set up the phone system for you and customize it for your specific needs, but also be there to provide personalized support, training, and help over the phone AND in-office support should the need arise.

One Final Key Point: As already discussed above in the "Problems With VoIP", you really want to work with a phone system vendor that is also an IT firm, like us. Because your phone resides on your computer network, the network must be assessed prior to installing a phone to ensure it can properly handle the added bandwidth requirements, and to ensure the firewall and router are configured properly. Only an IT firm will know how to do this properly.

By doing the assessment BEFORE you buy, you can prepare in advance and be aware of any additional costs you may incur with the phone.

Again, many phone vendors won't do this assessment (or won't do it properly) and then will sell you a phone, only to let you discover later you have to incur hundreds or thousands of dollars in costs to make it work.



How To Avoid Hidden Fees, Onerous Contracts And Bad Sound Quality:

In addition to questions about support covered above, there are some additional questions you want to ask BEFORE signing a contract.

How can I be certain the sound quality will be excellent with your system?

As previously discussed, make sure the person selling you the phone actually conducts an assessment of your network and bandwidth to guarantee the phone will sound and perform perfectly. Ask them to guarantee that in advance so you don't have any unpleasant surprises of a faulty system or additional fees and ongoing bills you didn't budget for.

How can I cancel and get out of the contract?

What are the fees involved? Do you offer any type of money-back guarantee? This is a very important question to ask, especially if the phone system doesn't perform the way you want.

Many phone system companies will lock you into a long-term contract that you will have to pay hefty fines to get out of, even if the service is terrible and the phone doesn't work as advertised.

What are the startup and recurring costs?

Do I need special cabling?



Can I keep my current phone number? Are there any additional costs involved to keep my number?

Does the quote include taxes? What other ongoing fees and costs are there?

This is a VERY important question to ask because many phone system salespeople leave off the cost of taxes and other (admin) fees when sending you a quote.

Does your system include International calling?

Will it work with my current firewall, router, Internet, and network settings?

This needs to be assessed BEFORE you buy a phone system, otherwise you could be faced with additional fees

Does your system support faxing?

If my employees need to work from home, how does your phone system accommodate that? How does the transition happen if we suddenly have to work remotely due to a covid-type shutdown or another disaster?

What type of training and support do you provide after the new system has been installed?

Get the vendor to SHOW you how to change office hours, how calls are routed, how to add a new employee, set up out of office, etc, or inquire if they will do them for you. They'll all SAY it's easy but let them show you on a demo phone. That way you can see how just "easy" it is (or not!).

What features are included? And which ones cost extra?

The Most Important Feature(s) To Look For:

Voice Mails E-mailed To You:

This is a feature many of our clients don't ask for (initially) but later tell us is one of their favorites.

Text Communications To Clients:

This is particularly important if your business ships products and services OR relies on client/patient appointments. We live in a mobile-dependent society and many customers, clients, and patients prefer to receive text communications over phone calls.

Call Routing When The Internet

Goes Down: Another key feature to have is instantaneous, automatic failover for phone calls if and when the Internet goes down.

Here is the biggest secret to the phone system industry: for the most part, it's a highly competitive field and every feature offered by one phone system is offered by them all. Marketing hypes about how their phone system is "the best" or better than the rest is often just marketing propaganda that should be taken with a grain of salt.

The most important feature of all is often not the phone itself, but the after-sale service.

Who is setting it up, who will be there to install it, configure it and make sure it works and who will you call when you need help. Ask the important questions and be informed before signing on the dotted line.



ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready to make a move to a new phone system? Curious if you could save money on your phone and Internet bills? Do you HATE your current VoIP system and want to find a replacement – but are stuck in a contract you don't know how to get out of without paying huge fines and early cancellation fees?

Go online to:

<http://www.meetingtreecomputer.com/contact/>

Call us direct at 845-237-2117

E-mail us at info@meetingtreecomputer.com

Or schedule a 15-minute introductory meeting:

<https://calendly.com/meetingtreecomputer> (mention VoIP in the comment box) and let us know your preferred way of contact – phone, in person, or a virtual meeting.

Let us look at your current phone system and advise you on ways you can improve it.

Even if you don't have an immediate need for a new phone system or are still stuck in a contract, it never hurts to have a fresh pair of eyes look at your current system and give you no-obligation suggestions on how to make improvements.

We hope that you become our client, but if not, that's okay! You have our guarantee that absolutely no high-pressure sales tactics will be used at any point during our engagement.

We simply want this to be a delightful, informative, and positive experience for you!

