

Moving to a new business phone system

CloudCoCo Guide

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AN INTRODUCTION

Phone systems have been installed in offices of all different sizes for more than 40 years, providing a vital service to the business. Since then, telephone call handling has matured to become intertwined with the day-to-day process of running the business.

The average business phone system lasts anywhere between six and eight years, after which the system is either out of maintenance or is lacking in features, often to the extent that it is hurting the performance of the business.

New software-based communications solutions don't need dedicated hardware in the server room or IT office anymore, because the entire system runs in the cloud.

In many instances, desk phones are not even required anymore. New phone solutions often include a "soft phone" or "client" that runs on many different devices, such as your PC, tablet or smartphone.

Modern phone solutions no longer offer just "voice". They have transformed to offer a range of capabilities such as instant messaging, video calling, collaboration tools and mobility solutions, all designed to keep your business at maximum productivity

This document will endeavour answer common questions that arise when looking for new business telephony.



YOUR NEXT SYSTEM

It's easy to simply go out and buy a like for like replacement for your phone system, but doing so would mean you are missing a golden opportunity to bring a range of powerful new capabilities into your business.

Before you start looking at different phone system options, think carefully about what you need in your next phone system.

Here are a few things to think about:

Missed Calls:



How many phone calls does your business miss because the call either goes to someone who is out of office or all the lines are busy?

Different Systems:



Do you have different systems in different offices resulting in features that don't work the same and causing staff confusion?

Infrastructure Maintenance:



Is your phone system a vital part of your business and if it goes down, will you suffer for it?

Do you worry about having to find elements of the phone system yourself if something goes wrong?

Fluctuating Expenses:



Are you worried about unexpected bills with tiered minutes pricing or high international calling costs?

When you bought your last phone system, do you think you got a good deal or did you find a lot of hidden costs afterwards?

YOUR NEXT SYSTEM

Here are a few more things to think about:

Enterprise Usage:



Do your remote workers struggle with calling people in the business simply because they're remote?

Do staff struggle with the endless set of buttons on the handset and end up dropping customer calls?

Do your mobile workers feel detached from the business when they are out of the office?

Does the phone system really deliver the professional image that you want to portray for your business?

If you've identified with some or all of these questions, you are not alone. They are some of the most common issues we see today in the business world when it comes to replacing a phone system.

Chances are you will need to prioritise these questions into the ones that are most important for your business. We'll look at that prioritisation a little later on, but in the meantime let's focus on what your next phone system can do for you.

To make things easier we'll just stick to cloud based phone systems, as they are regarded as the best solutions for companies with less than 500 people, especially when they are dispersed over a large number of sites.

MODERN PHONE SYSTEMS

How do modern phone systems help my business?

It is easy to get lost in the jargon of technology with people espousing acronyms about features that may or may not make sense to you. So let's try to narrow down your new phone system into some key areas:

Cost



We'll start with what is one of your primary concerns – costs. Will this phone system save me money?

Most cloud phone services come with a fixed minutes and user plan. You pay a certain amount for the user and the minutes come with it.

That's it – end of costs concerns. And many cloud systems also have very powerful fraud management capabilities that will catch a problem before you are even aware

Flexibility



This is linked to costs. Chances are when you bought your last phone system you ended up over specifying it because you had to buy it in specific configurations. In the cloud, you just buy what you need – no more, no less. If you need more capability in the future, you just add it. You only pay for what you use today and add more users as your business grows

Disasters



We never like to think they happen, but they do. Suppose the electricity board manages to put their digger through your phone lines - what do you do? What happens if there is a fire or a flood? With a cloud-based phone system, you can work from anywhere. Everyone can decamp down to the nearest Starbucks and continue working just as normal. Your customers will never know the difference.

MODERN PHONE SYSTEMS

How do modern phone systems help my business?



Consistency

You may have added offices over a number of years and inherited different phone systems that work in different ways. With the cloud, all the systems work the same everywhere. So your offices, mobile workers and remote workers will all have access to the same powerful range of features.



Professionalism

Cloud-based phone systems have a large array of features. Now you can deliver a highly professional image by having auto attendants, hunt groups and a range of other call routing features, so that you always look totally professional to your customers.



Usability

Cloud systems integrate with your IT systems so you can simply click to call out of a web page or directory listing. These systems are also integrated with major cloudbased CRM and customer support applications enabling your business to become more efficient.



Productivity

With cloud-based phone systems, you can implement a range of productivity features that allow your current staff to communicate and collaborate much more effectively. Features such as collaboration, conference calling and instant messaging can dramatically improve productivity.

MODERN PHONE SYSTEMS

Mobility



Chances are your workforce is getting increasingly mobile. You need to be where your customer is and so being mobile is vital. But being mobile should not mean being disconnected from the business. Yes, people have mobile phones, but do they know if a person is really in the office or not? Can they get that vital message through at 5:55 p.m. to win a major new contract? With cloud-based phone systems, the mobile worker is always connected to the central nervous system of your business. They are not remote - they are just mobile.

Maintenance



The days of calling the telecoms engineer are well and truly over. Chances are, with a cloud-based phone system you will never see that person again. Phones are easy to move around with no specialist skills involved. System management is all done via the web with lots of handy videos to step you through the more complicated tasks. Cloud systems are designed to make your life easy and just keep running 24/7 so you don't have to worry about the costs or waiting for the telecoms man to come and find something





WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?

What should I look out for when buying?

We have arranged the key features you should look out for by category, in order to make the selection process a little bit easier.

Key issue	Key things to ask for
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check what is included and not included in the minutes bundle.• Are there any exit clauses in the service contract?• Do you have to rent the phones for longer than the service contract?
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you add or remove users during the service contract?• Do you have to pay for devices or for users?
Disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can the system divert calls to tablets or mobile phones when the access network is down?• Are there restrictions in the features when people are remote?
Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are all the features available to remote workers or do some get removed?• Is the quality the same - for example, some mobile phones only use a technology called VoIP when remote, which can hurt voice quality if the network is congested.

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Usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the features same on the phone, PC and mobile devices or are they different?• Do you still have to rely on a telephone?
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the system support features such as auto attendant, music on hold, automatic call distribution, call queuing, so you never miss a call?
Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the system have features like conferencing, room based collaboration and instant messaging and presence?
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the system support iOS and Android devices?• Can it support all the productivity features above when mobile?
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the system have web-based user self-administration and allow you to control powerful features from a single web page?• Does the service support diagnostics so the service provider can quickly identify any issues that you may run into?

MAKING THE DECISION

Which cloud phone system should I choose?

There are many different types of cloud phone systems to choose from, but it pays to really understand the underlying technology – or platform – behind your service provider. The platform determines the provider's ability to innovate rapidly and drive the biggest impact for your business.

Some phone system providers base their service on freeware code that has been available for many years on the Internet. It's great for them because it

is low-cost to develop and allows them to start their businesses up quickly. Unfortunately many of these freeware-based services have issues with quality, and more worryingly security that ultimately could cost you dearly with a fraud attack.

By contrast there are some highly industrialised platforms out in the market today developed by specialised vendors. They deliver superior features and functionality, reliability and a proven track record.





IN CONCLUSION

...and finally

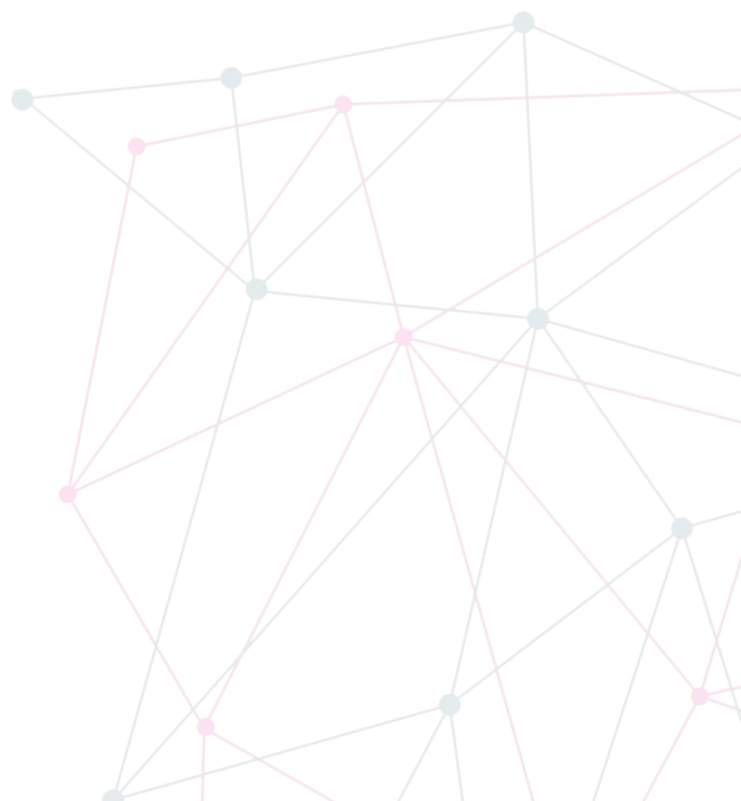
Buying the correct phone system has the potential to make a huge difference to the success of your business in the next 5-10 years. Choosing the right system could mean hiring less staff winning more contracts, worrying less about disasters and yes, saving you money.

If you've outgrown your current business phone system, take the time to go through the questions we've outlined above, and write out your top needs

and requirements before contacting your local service provider.

And last not but not least, be sure to ask about the underlying technologies that the service provider has in place. The fanciest features or the lowest price won't do you much good if the quality, reliability and security are not core components of the service provider's platform upon which your services are offering.

Why not modernise your phone system today! Cloud communications can reduce costs, reduce risks, and boost value for your company.





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