

[Quick Guide]

How to Choose the Best Office Phone System

A Guide to Reduce the Time, Expense and Confusion

It's Time to Upgrade



If your office phone looks something like this, it's probably time to upgrade, but buying a new phone system can be daunting. Just type in “office phone systems”, “phone systems for small business”, or “the best office phone systems” in Google. You will find more than 400 million choices, enough to convince you that your outdated phone system really is kind of retro cool.

With so many options, so many payment plans, and technical terminology worthy of a translation app, it can be hard to know if you're comparing apples to apples or apples to trees.

There are basic functions every office needs and your current phone system probably handles, such as voicemail, call transfer, call forwarding, etc. The value of upgrading your phone system is in those features you don't know about that improve collaboration, communications, customer service, and cost efficiencies.

Office Phone Systems 101

The lifespan of a legacy phone system generally tops out at 8-10 years. If you're still using a landline or components are breaking, your phone system is on borrowed time. The cost of service, the frequency of repairs, and the availability of replacement parts can become a business communications problem requiring a significant end-of-life reinvestment. At some point, the service provider will simply stop supporting the equipment you've relied on for years.

Your vendor is likely to recommend a next generation replacement, but you owe it to yourself to see if other options might better meet your business needs now—and moving forward. You could also save yourself some money in the process!

Choose Wisely

Landline systems: We would be doing you a disservice to present pros and cons for landlines, because “pros” are getting harder to justify. While landline systems are time-tested and reliable, they are going the way of the dinosaur. Many service providers are phasing them out.

VoIP: When it first became available several years back, VoIP got a bad reputation due to bad voice quality and unreliability, but the difference between VoIP then and VoIP now is night and day. Leading providers like Mitel have multiple data centers that provide redundancies should the Internet go down in one location.

VoIP on Premise: Having your phone system hosted in your office means all of the equipment to keep the system running is housed on your premises. It also means that you purchase this equipment and the phones for each user.

Pros: You are in control of your service and have access to our equipment at all times. For organizations that need a customized solution and high security, this may be a viable option, but you need someone to maintain it. Another point in favor of this model is that because you own the equipment, there are no recurring costs outside of your regular telephone service.

Cons: You bought it, now you own it. Technology can become obsolete in short timeframes, so there is no easy nor inexpensive upgrades of hardware. There are also renewals of warranties on this equipment that can be costly to maintain.

Cloud-based VoIP Systems: Hosted VoIP systems are a good option for large and small organizations that do not want to make a large capital expenditure, but want a modern phone system that is feature rich.

Pros: Easy to configure, no maintenance or hardware other than the phones, and even then, the phone can be leased for a few dollars each per month. Your service provider hosts, maintains and upgrades the technology for you. When it's time for a new system, the replacement cost is next to nothing, and systems can be up and running quickly.

Cons: If the system goes down, you must rely on the hosted provider to fix it. Another consideration is that you don't ever own anything. Hosted phone systems have an unending monthly fee, which typically includes the phones and the service.

[Features + More Features]

It's easy to be dazzled by all the features a new phone system offers, but a good consultant can help you identify those options truly worth the cost and prevent you from going for unnecessary bells and whistles. Here are some of the VoIP system features you may find most useful:

Here are some of the VoIP system features you may find most useful:

- Voicemail and Voicemail-to-Email
- Visual Voicemail, which presents a list of messages for playback, allowing you to select messages instead of listening to them sequentially
- Call forwarding, transferring, recording and queues
- Collaboration tools such as conference calling, instant messaging, video chat and desktop sharing
- Mobile apps that allow you to seamlessly work from out of the office
- Auto attendants
- Integration with programs such as Microsoft Outlook and Salesforce





```
def _operation == "MIRROR_X":  
    mirror_mod.use_x = True  
    mirror_mod.use_y = False  
    mirror_mod.use_z = False  
elif _operation == "MIRROR_Y":  
    mirror_mod.use_x = False  
    mirror_mod.use_y = True  
    mirror_mod.use_z = False  
elif _operation == "MIRROR_Z":  
    mirror_mod.use_x = False  
    mirror_mod.use_y = False  
    mirror_mod.use_z = True
```

[Ask Questions]

Think of your business plans before you think about phones:

- Do you have staff that work from home, in the field or in multiple office locations?
- Do you expect to expand geographically? Internationally?
- Do you anticipate significant changes in staff numbers or organizational structure?
- Do you want your phone system to integrate with your CRM database?

The answers to these questions will help you determine:

- If it makes more sense to stick with the tried and true traditional landline service or move to a Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) system which runs over the Internet.
- If it is better to house your system on premises or host it in the cloud.

Questions to ask a potential office phone system provider:

- What are the implementation & recurring costs?
- Are there other fees?
- Is there a contract? What about cancellation fees?
- Which features are included and which cost extra?
- Are you in a contract with another provider, and what are the terms of that contract?
- What is the vendor's timeframe for install?
- What kind of support is available?



The VoIP phones were the perfect fit for our organization's communication needs. The well-designed software has made many tasks simpler to perform with just one mouse click. The in-house training we received from Summit was very useful and tailored to our individual needs. This experience just adds to the exceptional technological support that we have enjoyed through the years with Summit Business Technologies.



- American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics, Inc.

One Size Doesn't Always Fit All.

We have been comparing, vetting, testing and selling phone systems for years. We train employees on the cool new features that make upgrading your phone system worth the cost. Moreover, we know what to look for in phone contracts to avoid unpleasant surprises. Call us and we'll share a few phone system stories that will make you glad you did.

Contact

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