Top 5 Things to Remember When Buying a New Phone System

Businesses have many reasons to look for a new phone system. They range anywhere from adding staff or outgrowing their existing system to catastrophic events such as power surges or lightening strikes. So, when purchasing a new telephone system, what should you look for? Where to begin? Below we have compiled a list of the top 5 things to remember when buying a new phone system:

1. **What's my budget?** This seems like a simple question, but it really does begin here. An average cost per telephone can run from $50 up to well over $500. Where does your budget fall? Be realistic- there is a huge difference between a $50 phone and a $250 phone. Keep in mind some of the next items below and you will be able to formulate a budget that will allow you to purchase the system that best meets your needs and budget.

2. **What shape is my data network in?** Phone systems today are either digital, VoIP, or a hybrid of the two. If you are going to go VoIP, you'd better have a data network that is not in shambles! On the other hand, you can always run a few cables to overcome a bad network, so the cost may not be prohibitive to go with VoIP.

3. **What features do I need to have**? If you currently have a phone system and are using various features, write them down. Consider your business processes and how you currently operate. Jot down your call flow, where the calls come in, where they go, and where they end up. Have you built employees' job functions around any features of the existing phone system? If so, consider whether you are willing to change or not. Many people erroneously assume that a new system will be able to emulate their old one, just adding new features and functionality. While this may indeed be the case, it just as easily may not be. Always be prepared!

4. **How many phones do I need?** While seemingly easy to answer, you should be thinking not only about today, but also about potential growth of your company. Some phone systems max out at a certain size and must be replaced if you need to add any more phones. Others easily scale from very small to very large. Budget comes into play here as well. Systems that max out generally are cheaper than those that do not.

5. **Do I want to have the system on site or hosted?** A recent trend in software and data networks is to host systems off site either at data centers or pay simply for the service monthly. This may work for you, or it may be cost prohibitive. Advantages of hosting are easy scalability, service calls and maintenance included in the monthly bill, and big business features are available for the small office. Disadvantages are you pay a fee every month which never goes away and the system will be riding on your internet so if your speeds are slow or unreliable, call quality will likely suffer. Hosting in a data center removes all quality issues but comes at a price.