

10 Considerations

When Replacing Your Telephone System

1. What are we trying to accomplish?

Needs Assessment: Take the time to identify both business and technical requirements, a proper needs assessment will create a clear path to improvement in business productivity. The process should uncover ways that a new system can bring tangible efficiencies in workflow and productivity.

2. Do all VoIP systems do the same thing?

System Features: Even for the well informed, comparing features between different manufacturers can be a challenge. It is true that all systems will provide key features such as hold and transfer, and have basic calling capabilities. However, there are significant variations in user experience between different manufacturers. Special consideration should be given to the features highlighted in the needs analysis, and those that are currently critical to end users.

3. Did we involve key strategic users?

Stakeholders: Selecting a few key users to be a part of the decision making process from the beginning of the project is essential. By aligning the process with your users, you will create an environment that will help you differentiate between products. Users with an investment in the success of the project are more engaged and can become your best promoters.

4. Why not an out of the box solution?

Customization: More than likely, a significant investment has already been made into your network infrastructure. So, consider a solution that has the flexibility to utilize existing elements rather than “rip and replace.” There can be a great deal of savings that need to be considered and your vendor should be able to recognize and utilize these possibilities.

5. How are we going to train our users?

Emphasis on End User Training: Often overlooked or assumed, user training is a critical component to the successful outcome of your project. Training is the only way to recognize real productivity gains from your technology investment. It needs to be more than a document or a video, and should provide an opportunity for the users to ask questions and learn about how the technology delivers efficiency to their work-flow.

6. Is the network infrastructure ready?

Network Capabilities: Can the current network architecture support the new demands of real-time voice? Any data switch supporting IP or SIP endpoints must have the ability to perform layer 3 switching including VLAN and QoS. Additionally, the network needs to be correctly configured to utilize these features. Proper network management and planning are the key to a successful voice deployment over an existing network.

7. Do we still need plain old telephone service (POTS Lines)?

Existing Technology: Legacy analog can be an unplanned expenditure when considering the additional budgetary costs required to maintain those devices. Devices such as fax machines, security alarm monitoring, or credit card processors cannot always be transferred to a pure IP network.

8. Do I need more bandwidth?

Network Assessment: A Network Readiness Assessment (NRA) determines if voice traffic will be impacted by jitter, delay or latency issues. These QoS events will not impact data traffic. But they will definitely affect call quality. Having this assessment done pro-actively removes the risk from the post implementation followup. The value of these assessments is in the consistently excellent sound quality of the calls even during peak traffic events.

9. Are we protected in an emergency situation?

Emergency Response: It may be a legal requirement to provide the 911 call center with the location of a caller within a facility. It is critical in an emergency situation that users can get the help they need. Knowing what your e911 obligations are a head of time can save time and frustration down the road.

10. Considerations for tomorrow and beyond...

Support Contracts: Choosing the system or solution that is the best fit is only half the battle. The other half is choosing a reliable company for installation, training, and support. A company that integrates, installs, as well as provides ongoing supports saves time and resources. Long term support is what matters most. Downtime can be exponentially more expensive in more ways than you realize.