



Phone Systems Buyers Guide

How to choose the right phone system for your business



We like to make it easy for you

This guide aims to give you up to date information on the latest systems and features that are currently available on the market. We like to give the facts in plain English so you can make a decision based on your business. But, rest assured that our team of engineers and support staff know their VoIP from their PBX's

Did you know?



Did you know a new phone system could help reduce your carbon footprint.

This is true for two reasons. Firstly, helping workers communicate more efficiently from remote locations, reducing unnecessary travel to clients or workers that can work from home.

"We were using different companies for our telephony needs but we found that by switching to Pioneer we were able to save even more money. If we have a failure on our phone system we lose money by the second, if customers can't get through to us they will contact one of our competitors. Our new phone system has prevented this from happening." - ISL Office Solutions



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01 Business communication solutions, what this guide will do...

This buyers guide is aimed to help you make an informed decision by simplifying the technical jargon that surrounds telephone systems.

You are considering a new phone system, you need to know that you are getting the best service from a specialist who understands your requirements and will help you select the right business phone system.

This guide will help you consider the best telephone system for your needs and ultimately, make a wise investment. So keep this guide in mind as you gather information from phone system reviews and move from general guidance about phone systems for small businesses to actually going ahead to make a decision about the right telephone phone system for your business.

02 Do I need to upgrade my phone system? Is it time to switch?

A business communication system can revolutionise the way you work. It can save you time, whilst also increasing your revenue, staff productivity and profitability. Up to date, modern phone systems have plenty of features that can save you time and money, whilst also bringing you in new business through marketing what your company has to offer.

Your business telephone system won't follow a definitive time line that tells you when it's time to make a change, however there are many reasons that will generate the need for a new telephone system within your business:

- ✓ Relocating premises
- ✓ You need a more cost effective solution
- ✓ You need greater voice capacity
- ✓ You want to start using your telephone system to generate sales or refine your sales approach.
- ✓ Your workforce has multiplied and a more intelligent system is needed
- ✓ You need more flexibility and functionality
- ✓ Your old system has become unreliable

03 What do you need from your new telephone system?

- How many users would benefit from a phone on their desk?
- How reliant is my business on the phone system operating?
- Do I need to monitor staff performance more efficiently?
- Do any calls go through an assistant before reaching the desired contact?
- Will you be taking on new staff in the near future?
- Will your staff be working remotely in the future?
- Will my new phone system be expected to work along side any other IT, e.g. a CRM package, such as Dynamics or Salesforce.

04 Focus on the features?

Choosing the right features for your business telephone system will drive both efficiency and productivity while saving you money in the long run. Features in your current system will be a necessity, and it's also important to consider new features that may be offered from your new provider that could increase your productivity, marketing reach and eventually generate you more revenue.

Some of the features available on the market today include;

Call Recording

Call Recording software enables you to automatically capture every phone conversation that takes place and allows you to instantly replay that call. Recordings can be saved to your CRM system to help improve sales and customer service performance. Call Recording also provides a valuable resource for delivering staff evaluation, training and development.

On Hold Marketing

Are callers been placed on hold? Why not use this as an opportunity to tell them about your latest offers and promotions. You have a captive audience looking for your services. This feature can be controlled and updated by you, or find a telecoms partner who can regularly update your messages.

Why is on hold marketing important:

- 70% of business callers are placed on hold or transferred
- 90% will hang up after 40 seconds if confronted with silence
- 34% of callers who hang up will not call back
- 88% of callers prefer on hold productions to other options

- 20% of callers who hear an on hold production make a purchasing decision based on information they have heard
- 90% of on hold marketing users say it increases product and service awareness

Computer Telephone Integration (CTI)

Greet your customers in a more personable way. Establish who they are before you answer. You can also see a wealth of information by using call history, find out who called you, identify missed calls and know a customer or clients call history as soon as they call in.

"Training of the staff went without a hitch, and that is extremely important in a busy environment where your main line of communication with your clients is suddenly all new to you." - Henderson Chambers



Call reporting

Amongst many benefits, you can see comprehensive reports on call traffic, including your busiest time of day. You will be able to use this information to manage your call handling and your customers will be happier because they never have to hear the engaged tone.

Voicemail

Reduce the chances of a caller hanging up. With a voicemail system they have a choice. They can wait for the right person to answer the call, or alternatively leave a message. An auto attendant ensures customers always reach who they need to and refers them directly to a member of staff or a department.

Wallboard

Display key information with digital display wallboards to improve productivity and communication within your business. A wallboard can make your sales team more competitive. You can also show important information on a big screen in the office for all your staff to see.



Conferencing

Hold conference calls with colleagues. Complete conference recording means you will have a record of everything said during the conference.

Transfers

If a customer calls in for someone specifically, call transfer ensures they can always reach them. Whether a colleague is working from home or away from the office, calls can easily be transferred to them directly.

Extensions Status

See who is away, who is engaged and who is free even if they aren't sitting next to you. The extension list will show you all of this. You can also call your colleagues directly at the touch of a button.

DECT - Digitally Enhanced Cordless Telephones

Full functionality digital cordless handsets allow users to stay in touch wherever they are in the building. It eliminates the "I'm sorry he's not at his desk at the moment" scenario. They are really useful for companies with warehousing or factories, they are also essential for anybody who spends a lot of time in different areas of the building (MD's etc).

Call monitoring

Review the performance of individual operators by reporting their call activity, missed calls and average call length.

Many providers have access to a few of the features listed; however few can claim to have access and experience in all.

05 Does the product make business sense?

- Will it cost you anything up front?
- Is the net result of the upgrade a saving or a cost to my business? If so will the value added outweigh the additional cost?
- How simple is it to update your hardware/software? As your business grows you need to ensure your provider and chosen phone system can cope with expansion
- Will there be any down time? Most phone system installations are undertaken within 2 days, you need to make sure your provider has experience in limiting the impact on your business.

06 Support and service, the after care of your system

Your telephone system is no doubt a key platform to running your business successfully and communicating effectively with both internal staff members and also external clients and suppliers. You need a system that you can rely on, and that if something does go wrong, a supportive, fast reacting service is there to help you get you back to normal.

Make sure your supplier has a support Service Level Agreement, this should give you the confidence that you're in safe hands. The industry works to a standard of 2 hours for most faults to be rectified with major faults taking a maximum of 24 hours.

07 It's time to look for a supplier

So it's time to start looking for a supplier for your new system. You need a reliable supplier that gives you and your business value for money, whilst still providing you with the very best product and service,

What to look for in a supplier:

Relevant history

Are they an established provider with a background of implementing telephone systems that are relevant to your needs?

Solutions

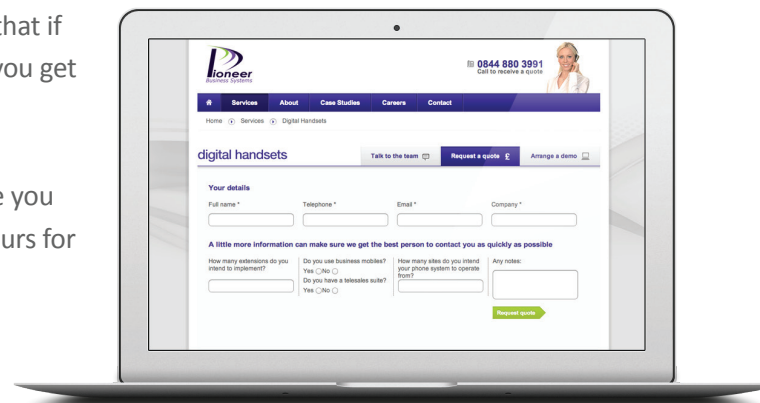
Do they offer products and services that can fulfil your business requirements today and tomorrow?

Support services

Is customer service as important to them as it is to you and will they be available when you need them?

Value

What are you paying for? A telephone system needs flexibility, upgradability, continuity, reliability and security.



08 Ownership

You have 2 options when considering the ownership options of a new phone system:

Outright cash payment, the obvious advantage is you will save an APR that may be attached to a lease agreement, however the major disadvantages are:

1. The full amount is taken out of cash flow
2. The support and warranty will tend to last only 12 months
3. No third party support in the event of a dispute with your provider

The second option is lease plan. This option is by far the best route for purchasing a new phone system even if your company is cash rich, here is why:

1. Most suppliers rely heavily on the agreements with lease providers and will make sure any client with a lease agreement is happy and well looked after.
2. Most providers can include the calls and line rental in the cost of your lease, so you benefit from an upfront reduction in line rental and roll the cost into a simple monthly fee. So the price of the phone system is the total telecoms price
3. Payment terms of 7 years (the average phone system is designed to last 10 years) meaning the monthly lease amount is minimal and usually a saving on the current telecoms cost.

“We are so pleased with the result. The new system has made our lives easier and has dramatically improved the experience for our patients.”

- Hedge End Medical Centre

09 Best practice ideas

On Hold Marketing

60% of callers put on silent hold hang up. Callers hearing information on hold stay on the line up to 3.5 minutes longer than those faced with silence

Call Recording

There are many different reasons that businesses look to implement a call recording service, and it goes without saying that each organisation will have individual needs.

There are plenty of features on various phone systems which can do the above, and depending on your business, will depend on which features you need and want.



10 Tips & Advice

VoIP versus IP

VoIP refers to voice over internet protocol, and IP or IP telephony stands for Internet protocol. This means that call data is carried over the internet, rather than via traditional telephone lines. VoIP offers a substantial cost savings over traditional long distance telephone calls. The main disadvantage of VoIP is a greater potential for dropped calls and degraded voice quality when the underlying network links are under heavy load.

Headsets...when flexibility and comfort are vital

The introduction of headsets in many offices nowadays show the way ahead for many companies. The use of a headset allows a worker to operate "hands-free", this lets them multi task, move around the office and make notes. You will be able to increase productivity of your team.

The use of headsets allow you to comply with EU health and safety directives by reducing possibility of RSI, back pain or headaches for your employees.

Interactive Voice Response

This technology is widely used nowadays. It allows clients to interact with your telephone system by entering information vocally. This technology allows you to speed up customer interactions with your organisation and get them to the right personnel or team speedily.

"The deal was painless and we wouldn't hesitate to recommend you to others. The result is another happy client who feels that Pioneer are always available and are prepared to go that extra mile." - Harwoods Bentley



What's Next?

Why not book a consultation with one of our telecoms consultants

Call us on:

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or visit our website

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Platinum Business Partner

Approved Partner
Siemens Enterprise
Communications

SIEMENS

70,000+
Users Across UK

8000+
UK Installations

2hrs
Response Time

Established
1999