

# Need a new phone system?



## iPBX BUYING GUIDE

### How to choose the right phone system for your business

Whilst moving to an IP phone system has great advantages, the more options, features, functions and capabilities that are available, the more decisions the buyer has to make. That makes it crucial to thoroughly understand your needs before you buy. The following are seven steps to help in that process.



### 1 Determine how many and what kind of users you need to support

This isn't necessarily the same as counting the number of phones or extensions you will need. You may need phones at the reception area or loading dock, but such phones may not represent individual users and you probably don't want to pay the same monthly fee for those extensions as you would for your sales staff. In addition, if there are many users that will be working from home or other remote sites, you'll want a solution that makes it as easy as possible to set up and configure their phones. In fact such ease of setup may let you use more remote workers than you might otherwise. Either way, a thorough analysis of the number and type of users you need to support is a crucial first step in choosing the right system.

#### How many users do I need to support?

- » Main office
- » Branch office/s
- » Remote workers
- » Call centre agents

#### What kind users do I need to support?

- » Attendants
- » General office
- » Remote workers/ telecommuters
- » Call centre agents



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## 2 Estimate how many simultaneous calls you need to support

Simultaneous calls can vary depending on the type of business you have. A typical business may need to handle anywhere from 3 to 5 simultaneous calls per every 10 employees. Whereas in a call centre type setup it may be more 8 to 10 calls per 10 employees.

It is important to know this number if you are planning to use the flexibility of IP telephony to tailor your service to your needs. For example, with a traditional PBX, your options include buying either individual analog lines or higher-capacity circuits. On the other hand, you can buy SIP (VoIP) trunks that run over your broadband Internet connection in the exact numbers you need. SIP trunks can connect directly to your IP PBX.

- » How many simultaneous calls do I need to support?
- » How many circuits do I need to support my call volumes?

## 3 Decide what kind of phones your different users need

There are many different phones that offer a variety of functions so you are able to tailor the phone to your users needs. A lot of employees may need little more than a dial tone, voicemail and the ability to transfer calls. Others will need multiple lines, speakerphones, programmable keys, bright colour LCDs and more. A more general consideration is whether you want to have to plug every phone, even those in the middle of conference room tables, into a power outlet. If not, make sure to get models with Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) capability. And if you don't have an extra Ethernet connection for every IP phone you're installing, try to get models with two ports, so users' computers can access the LAN through them.

### Phone features that your users may need?

- » Basic business phones
- » Speakerphones
- » 2 or multiple lines
- » Power-over-Ethernet
- » Dual ethernet ports
- » Programmable Keys
- » Video conferencing
- » Soft phones on a laptop or desktop
- » Tablet phones such as iPads
- » SIP mobile phones such as Blackberry, Nokia & iPhone

## 4 Determine how many support staff and how much time you can commit

IP PBXs are getting easier all the time to administer and manage. Still, doing it all in-house can require assigning a reasonably tech-savvy person to spend a fair amount of time on the task. The skills and time required will vary with the type of system involved, particularly when you are totally responsible for all maintenance. Comparing the requirements for each type of system to the staff resources you are in a position to commit will be a big help in clarifying your purchasing options.

- » How many support staff and how much time do I want to dedicate to my phone system?
- » How easy or difficult is it to manage the system? Can I manage it remotely?
- » How much will the supplier help monitor and maintain the system?
- » Who will be my internal trainer so they can get more advanced training?

## 5 Decide how important service quality, reliability and security are to you

Start by asking whether you can afford to lose phone service when your Internet connection goes down. If you can't, even temporarily, you'll need a solution that includes or relies entirely on PSTN connectivity, which provides a dedicated channel or circuit between you and your callers over traditional wired phone lines. The same applies if you need guaranteed voice quality. On the other hand, perhaps you can put up with a bit of uncertainty about how your calls will sound and feel confident that your Internet provider is reliable. If so, you may want to opt for the savings and features that come with VoIP connectivity. Most importantly, think carefully about how willing you are to have all your voicemail messages and prompts stored in a service provider's data centre rather than in your own building.

- » How much will my phone system depend on the Internet for the delivery and quality of calls?
- » Where do my voicemail messages, prompts and call records reside?
- » What are my disaster recovery options?

## 6 Analyse your long-distance calling patterns

This is the other half of the trade-off between the guaranteed reliability of PSTN service and the savings of VoIP connectivity. Look at how much you are currently paying for your PSTN phone service these can include:

- » Individual dedicated dial-in numbers
- » Inbound free call lines
- » Unlimited or per-minute calling plans
- » Long-distance and overseas charges for calls
- » Calls from and to mobiles, 1300 and 1800 numbers

Pay particular attention to routes that may cost significantly less with VoIP service. With these figures in hand, you'll be ready for the next step.

- » How much will do I currently pay for long-distance calling?
- » If you have multiple locations, how much are you paying for calls between different locations?
- » What are other communication charges and fees I am currently paying?

## 7 Determine which combination of PSTN and VoIP service will best fit your needs

If you decided that you have to rely solely on a PSTN service, you have already completed this step.

Otherwise, start by adding up the costs of extensions and calling plans you would need with a hosted VoIP service. Next, look at the various combinations of PSTN lines and SIP (VoIP) trunks that are possible with premise or hybrid-hosted IP PBXs. Then figure out what your current pattern of long-distance calls will cost you under the different combinations. Don't forget to note which solutions will give you free VoIP calling among your company's branches or sites, as traditionally hosted solutions do not include free VoIP calling among branch sites. Finally, decide what part, if any, of your voice traffic you're willing to send via VoIP in order to save money, and what part absolutely requires PSTN transport for quality, reliability and even safety purposes.

- » How much will I save by moving all my long-distance calling to VoIP?
- » How much will I save if all inter-branch calls are free via VoIP?
- » How important is guaranteed quality and reliability in my phone service?
- » How important is saving money, even if there's a quality and reliability risk?
- » What will the charges be for free call numbers?

## Making the right choice

Going through the above steps will help narrow down your choices. It may in fact eliminate some of the options entirely. For example, if you absolutely need the quality and reliability of PSTN delivery, a hosted service won't work for you. In the end you'll be balancing three main factors.

1. The payment to suppliers, including equipment purchases, maintenance contracts and telecom services
2. The quality and reliability of phone service
3. Your ability or willingness to monitor and maintain your equipment entirely on your own



Bob Bishop, CEO TTGroup

If after completing the evaluation of the selection criteria associated with the purchase of a new VoIP Telephone System, you are convinced a new Mitel System supplied by TTGroup Communications is the best outcome, "You will never be disappointed."

Our ever-increasing number of delighted customers is a testament to the competence and flexibility of the Mitel Product and the professionalism and dedication of the TTGroup staff.

**Please do not hesitate to contact us for an obligation 'free' appraisal of your business requirements and an ICT proposal on a solution specifically designed to meet the current and future needs of your businesses communications.**

## Products & Technology

TTGroup is an integrator of business communications solutions. TTGroup has achieved the highest level of accreditation in Mitel's and Telstra's PARTNER programs.

We have helped many Queensland businesses to smoothly migrate to the latest IP based solutions, with our revenue from Mitel unified communications solutions increasing year on year.

TTGroup Communications also received two prestigious national awards from Telstra based on their success offering unified communications solutions. TTGroup was awarded "Telstra Enterprise Channel Partner of the Year", and the inaugural "Telstra Enterprise Unified Communications Channel Partner Award".

Significant projects completed by TTGroup include solutions for CentreBet, Motorama Group, Trinity Lutheran College, WorkPac Group, QM Properties, Master Plumbers Association of Queensland, Sheldon College and Forest Lake Lodge retirement village.

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### More information?

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