10 Mistakes when Buying a Business Phone System

Why learn things the hard way? Here are 10 mistakes to avoid.

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Why learn things the hard way? In working with thousands of business buyers, we've heard too many sad tales about expensive mistakes they've made when making large purchases for their organizations without adequate information on the best vendors and best products for their needs. To help you avoid a regretful choice when purchasing your next phone system, here is a list of 10 mistakes to avoid.

Mistake 1:
Not Having a Back Up Telephone Land Line if You Buy a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) Phone System

Today, businesses rely on their phone systems for more than just phone calls. Fax machines, credit card terminals, and in-bound sales and customer service inquiries all depend on a working phone system. VoIP phone systems are an amazing technology for businesses from a cost and efficiency standpoint, but as with any technology, they can sometimes fail. You don't want your business to come to a total standstill in the event there's a system failure, so it's useful to have a regular old phone landline in the event of an emergency such as a power outage.

Mistake 2:
Not Having a Back Up Internet Connection

Just as you want to have a back up telephone land line in case you run into technical glitches with a VoIP phone system, you don't want your entire business to shut down in the event there is some failure with your Internet connection. For this reason, many companies arrange to have a back up broadband connection of some kind in the event their main connection, such as a T1 line, goes down. With so much commerce being Internet-dependant today, including your phone system, you want to ensure you can always get online.

Mistake 3:
Not Having a Phone System that Is SIP-based (Session Initiation Protocol)

SIP is a signaling protocol used for establishing sessions in an IP network, and it is now the protocol of choice among VoIP users. SIP works very well with Internet applications, and with an SIP-based system, you have access to a host of innovative services, including: voice-enriched e-commerce; click-to-call on Web pages; instant messaging with buddy lists; collaborative, multi-party, multimedia conference calls; and more.

Mistake 4:
Not Getting a Phone System that Is Scalable

Having a phone system that is scalable will ensure you don't need to buy a whole new system if your company grows or changes. You want to be able to add head count, grow your sales organization, add a new fax line, add a credit card terminal, and more without having to get an entire new system.

Mistake 5:
Not Getting a System that Is Compatible with Your Other Technologies

If your organization uses Microsoft Outlook for email, booking conference rooms, sharing calendars, and more, you want to make sure your phone system is compatible with Outlook. And this applies to any other technologies for truly unified communications. Proprietary technologies that seem inexpensive at first can end up costing your company far more money over time as employees become less efficient because the technologies don't talk to each other - for example, having to entering contacts and other information multiple times into different systems because of incompatible platforms.

Mistake 6:
Not Having Phone Lines and Numbers that Easily Transferable

You want to be able to easily move phone lines as well as transfer phone numbers if employees move to different locations within your office or even remotely. The key is to have a system that is flexible enough to handle the dynamic needs and changes of your organization.

Mistake 7:
Not Road Testing the Sound Quality of Your Phone System Ahead of Time

Testing your phone system for sound quality is essential. There are too many instances where the participants taking part an important conference call cannot hear the speakers or cannot be heard themselves. Failing at the basics (no one knows what the other party is saying) is something you want to avoid at all costs. Vendors should guarantee sound quality for all ends of the call.

Mistake 8:
Not Planning Ahead for the All the Features You'll Need
Having a clear understanding of the many features all of your employees will need before you purchase the phone system will enable you to make the right decision. The right auto attendant, voice mail service, hold music, the ability to record calls and save as

audio files, ring or hunt groups, call forwarding, and find-me-follow-me are just some of the features that your team may need. Asking your vendor about the most used features may give you ideas that you hadn't thought of. This is probably the most detailed part of your purchase decision, but it will be worth your time to think about all the use cases of your phone system so you have every feature you need.

Mistake 9:
Not Choosing a Provider that Has Adequate Data Centers
Whether your organization is international or even national, you want to ensure that the system provider has adequate data centers so calls that geographical distance does not become an obstacle to fast service.

Mistake 10:
Getting Locked into a Long Term Contract
As with other technologies today, phone systems are changing rapidly with new innovations coming to market and to meet changing business demands. In addition, prices are decreasing with systems that may be older but are still viable. Avoiding long term contracts if possible gives you the flexibility to make changes to your system if need be.