

# Choosing The *Right* Phone System For Your Small Business

## Buyer Beware!

**Do NOT Buy A New Phone System For Your Business Before Reading This Guide To Understand What You Are Getting Into, And To Avoid Getting Trapped In An Impossible-To-Cancel Contract For An Expensive, Frustrating Phone System You And Your Customers Hate**

### Read This Guide To Discover:

- ✓ The uncensored facts about the phone system industry that phone salespeople will not usually tell you, but that you should know before buying.
- ✓ How to cut through all the technical mumbo-jumbo and marketing hype to know what are truly the most important attributes and features to look for.
- ✓ A hidden “gotcha” clause phone system vendors try to put in their contracts that lock you in forever and legally bind you to pay thousands of dollars in penalties to cancel – even if the phone system and service doesn’t work as advertised. Do NOT sign a contract if this clause is in there!
- ✓ The proposal “shell game” of hidden costs, taxes and unanticipated monthly fees that 99% of all phone system salespeople WON’T tell you about before you buy and trick you into thinking you’re getting a bargain (you’re not).

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## **Phone System Marketing Is Out Of Control! How To Avoid Falling For The Hype (And Making A Poor Choice)**

If you're like most of our clients, you're probably looking for an honest expert who can advise you on which phone system is right for your specific situation and needs. One that is easy to use and works as advertised.

Problem is, phone system marketing is out of control online, with dozens of pure marketing sites posing as "best of" directories that are nothing more than marketing firms that are experts in search engine optimization (NOT phone systems) and sell leads and directory rankings to the highest bidder. They are NOT interested in providing good advice to you – they are interested in getting you to click or request a quote so they can sell your lead to multimillion and billion-dollar companies like Ooma, RingCentral, Vonage, etc.

In fact, marketing for "business phone systems" is one of the most competitive fields online, with a *single* Google click costing anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000! Is it any wonder that your search for "business phone systems" is full of SEO-optimized directories and big corporate players who can afford such outrageous marketing fees?

NONE of these sites provide you with useful information for making a good decision. The marketing directories that rank phone systems don't tell you how they are actually ranking their "top" providers or "best-rated." They often don't provide details on how the reviews are verified for integrity (if they're checked at all), and all reviews are anonymous. And they certainly are light on facts and transparency. Clearly, this is NOT how you want to choose your next phone system, and you can bet your bottom dollar that these sites won't be around to help you if the phone system you buy turns out to be a giant disaster.

Another marketing trick many use is offering free phones and "phone lines as low as..." type offers. These are often used as marketing bait to lead you into thinking you're getting a good deal – but buyer beware! We all know you get what you pay for, so these offers are perfectly acceptable – PROVIDED the phone actually performs as it should.

That's why we are providing this guide. Much of the advertising we see for phone systems is misleading and fails to tell you the **WHOLE** truth. Yes, there certainly **ARE** good money-saving deals out there and not all of them are fake – **but "cheapest price" should not be #1 on your list of criteria when making a decision on a new phone system because the money saved initially will be long forgotten and lost to countless hours of frustration later when you're trying to make a bad system work.**

We cannot change the way phone system vendors advertise, but we can help you make your way through the “geek speak” and half-truths. There ARE good phone system vendors out there. Lots of them. You just have to know what to look for and what questions to ask – which is what this report is about.

## **The 2 Biggest Problems With VoIP Phones And How To Avoid Them**

First of all, VoIP is a term that has become overused, and confuses a lot of people because, the frequency of use without honest explanation allows the sales person to take advantage of the misinformed. Many people think it’s a phone on your computer, a software application or a physical phone you plug into your PC.

VoIP refers to the transportation of voice traffic using data networks and the internet. While those previously mentioned options were all the early iterations of VoIP. Today, a “VoIP” phone is more of a SERVICE than a physical phone (although physical phones still play into this). With a VoIP service, you can use any cell phone, your PC or other devices to make calls and send messages, which gives you the ability to make and receive calls from any location with a reasonable hardwired, or WIFI Internet connection.

But many people have a fear of moving to a VoIP for two legitimate reasons. The first is call quality and the second is “What if the Internet goes down?” So, let me address both of those valid concerns and why with the RIGHT service, this is not an issue.

### **Problem #1: Call Quality**

It’s true that in the past, VoIP phones have been notorious for garbled, choppy, low-quality sound and dropped calls. However, the technology that operates these phones has come a long way in the last couple of years, and Internet bandwidth (which is a key component of call quality) is faster and cheaper, and more reliable.

**So, any sound quality issues you might have on a new VoIP system is due to two problems** – your bandwidth isn’t sufficient, or your firewall, router and computer network (where the phone now resides) are not set up properly for the phone. That’s it.

This is why it’s critical for your phone vendor to assess your network before selling you a phone – to make sure the phone you’re buying will actually work on the network you’re plugging it into.

**KEY POINT:** Most big phone vendors like AT&T, Comcast, Verizon or RingCentral will NOT do this assessment before selling you a phone. They will take your money, ship

you a phone in a box and leave you to set it up. When the call quality is horrible and you call them for help, they'll simply point the finger to your Internet provider, network bandwidth or computer network configuration and wish you good luck. They WON'T troubleshoot that issue for you, which is why you want to buy a phone system from a local company that will own 100% of the setup, problems and call quality.

## **Problem #2: What If The Internet Goes Down?**

Without a doubt, the internet WILL go down, but that doesn't mean your phone system has to. That's because the "brain" of the phone is not present in your office. It's hosted in a secure and highly reliable server that has multiple backup systems for Internet connectivity. Therefore, when your local Internet goes down, you can have the phone service automatically set up to do a number of things, such as:

- Route to a designated cell phone or other location.
- Go to an auto attendant you set up to allow the person to leave a voice mail, similar to your after-hours call system.
- Allow callers to leave a voice mail, and that voice mail can be e-mailed to you.

A good phone system vendor will set this up in advance so calls are automatically handled the way you want and instantly "fail over" without you having to do anything.

## **The Truth About All VoIP Phone Systems That No Salesperson Will Tell You**

**Here's the biggest "secret" to the phone system industry that you won't see any vendor advertising:** ALL phone systems are basically the same in features and capabilities.

Sure, there are a few things some phone systems can do that others can't, like integrate with your Salesforce CRM, but for the most part, it's a highly competitive field and every feature offered by one phone system is offered by them all. So, all the marketing hype about how *their* phone system is "the best" or better than the rest is just marketing propaganda that should be taken with a grain of salt.

**So, how DO you compare, and what IS the most important point of differentiation that you need to look for?**

Here it is: The most important “feature” is not in the phone itself but in the after-sale SERVICE – who is setting it up, who will be there to install it, configure it and make sure it works, and who will you call when you need help.

It should not surprise you that most small business owners and office managers do not know how to properly set up a phone system and customize it for their office, nor do they want to learn. They also don’t want to become experts at their phone systems – they simply want an EASY-TO-USE system that consistently works.

That’s why you want to really investigate the after-sale service. When something goes wrong or when you can’t get the system to do what you want it to do, how easy is it to get fast, easy and helpful support? Further, who will be there to conduct the cut over to the new system and make sure it works?

Here are two critical questions you need to ask the vendor about support BEFORE you buy:

**1. Who will set up my new phone system and customize it for my specific needs and situation?**

Get specifics here. Some vendors simply ship you a phone and require you to set it up yourself. Sure, they’ll *tell* you all you have to do is “plug it in,” but rarely is anything that easy. Instead of doing it for you, they’ll give you the 100-page instruction manual you’ll need to muddle through and a “customer support” website that will require you to search through hundreds of questions to find the answer to your specific problem, which is time-consuming and frustrating. Rarely do these sites provide the answers you need quickly.

Then, the day of the cut over, you’re scrambling to make the system work, frantically trying to figure out how to troubleshoot it and set it up.

Worse yet – if you CAN’T get it to work and you CAN’T get it to do what you want it to do, exactly how will they help you? Do they have local techs who will come to your office and set it up? Troubleshoot it? This brings me to the next question...

**2. How do I get help if the phone system isn’t working or I can’t get it to do what we need it to do?**

As outlined above, we all know how exasperating it is to try and get a “customer service” person to help from a big, nameless, faceless corporation.

So, we recommend you look for a reputable, local phone system reseller who will not only set up the phone system for you and customize it for your specific needs, but

also be there to provide personalized support, training and help over the phone AND in-office support should the need arise.

### **One Final, Important Point:**

As already discussed above in the “Problems With VoIP,” you really want to work with a phone system vendor that is also an IT firm, like us. Because your phone resides on your computer network, the network must be assessed prior to installing a phone to ensure it can properly handle the added bandwidth requirements, and to ensure the firewall and router are configured properly. Only an IT firm will know how to do this properly.

By doing the assessment BEFORE you buy, you can prepare in advance and be aware of any additional costs you may incur with the new phone service.

Again, many phone vendors won’t do this assessment (or won’t do it properly) and then will sell you a phone, only to let you discover later you have to incur hundreds or thousands of dollars in costs to make it work.

## **20 Critical Questions To Ask BEFORE Signing A Contract To Avoid Hidden Fees, Onerous Contracts And Bad Sound Quality**

In addition to the above questions about support covered earlier, here are 20 additional questions you want to ask BEFORE signing on the dotted line:

### **1. How many years have you been selling, installing and supporting phone systems?**

**Our Answer:** White-Harris Inc. has been selling, installing and supporting business phone systems for over 30 years throughout the Northeast United States.

### **2. How can I be certain the sound quality will be excellent with your system?**

**Our Answer:** As previously discussed, we will conduct an assessment of your network and bandwidth BEFORE selling you a new phone system to ensure it will work flawlessly with your current bandwidth, firewall and router. If you need upgrades for your network equipment, we can even roll that into the monthly fee so that you are able to move to your new phone system without ANY up-front costs.

Most companies won’t do this assessment, and instead simply sell you the phone. When things go wrong, they’ll point the finger at your IT guy or your Internet provider and tell you they can’t (won’t!) help you.



We take full ownership of the success of your new phone system and stand behind our guarantee of “flawless performance.” If anything is not working, we will troubleshoot the issue and work with whoever we need to in order to get it fixed. You will NEVER hear us say, “Sorry, that’s somebody else’s problem.”

**3. How can I cancel and get out of the contract? What are the fees involved?**

**Our Answer:** If, during the first 90 days, you are not happy with the new phone system and we are not able to resolve your issues, simply return the equipment and we will help you move your phone numbers to a different provider AT NO COST TO YOU.

**4. What are the start-up and recurring costs?**

**Our Answer:** We will review your current phone bill for usage to provide a customized service quote, which is detailed, and straightforward. Our service pricing includes local, and long distance calls to the US and Canada, and all the business phone system features you need. While some phone service companies will insist on selling you new phones, we welcome BYOD equipment, and will provide you with a list of supported manufactures, and devices, if you have a preferred source.

**5. Do I need special cabling?**

**Our Answer:** Our phone system uses the same network wire (or WiFi) as your computer network and works perfectly on 90% of the networks we assess. However, in some cases you might need updated cabling, more bandwidth or updated cyber security protections. That’s why we perform a detailed network assessment BEFORE we provide a final quote for implementing our phone system, so you will know in advance if your existing network will support our phones or if you need an upgrade, and how much that will cost. This is important for you to do no matter who you buy a phone system from. Some phone system companies do not test your network and may only look at bandwidth and sell you a system. This can lead to a lot of frustration when the phone doesn’t work – and added, unanticipated costs after you’ve already committed to buying. One of the reasons we have so many happy clients is because we are IT pros as well as phone system experts and know how to truly assess ALL aspects of a network to make sure you don’t experience sound quality issues, dropped calls and other problems.

**6. Do you offer any type of money-back guarantee?**

**Our Answer:** Yes! We offer a 90-day money-back guarantee. If you are not 100% thrilled with your new phone system for any reason, simply notify us in the first 90 days and we will remove the phones, help you move your phone to a different provider and refund 100% of the fees you paid us for the phone system, all at NO COST TO YOU. You shouldn’t have to be stuck with a phone system that doesn’t work for you.

**7. Can I keep my current phone number? Are there any additional costs involved in keeping my number?**

**Our Answer:** Yes! This is called “number portability.” Most companies will port your existing numbers over, and there is a fee to do so which will be identified on the quote. Another question you want to ask is how long will it take? We work with you to schedule the date for your service to be activated with a standard 10 day timeline. This way we can discuss your programming needs, and perform pre-activation wiring, programming, and training. On the port date at the scheduled time, your current number will instantly start ringing to your new phone system; but be careful here because some companies will take up to 90 days to get your old phone number ported over!

**8. Does the quote include taxes? What other ongoing fees and costs are there?**

**Our Answer:** Our phone system quote will show local state, and federal taxes and fees. An important note is there is a small, required 911 fee for each location where phones will be connected. Once you select the phones you want, we will provide a quote that includes all monthly costs so there are no surprises when you get your bill each month unless the federal taxes, and fees change, which is out of our control.

**9. What features are included? Which ones cost extra?**

**Our Answer:** This is always a good thing to verify because some providers will “intrigue” you with a great advertised price, but once you add all of the features you want, you’re paying a LOT more than the advertised price! That’s why you need to know in advance what features you want and make sure they are included. Here are some features that we **INCLUDE** at no extra fee that are important to have:

- Automatic call routing (if Internet goes down)
- Automated attendant
- After-hours and holiday messages
- Voice mail to e-mail
- Phone Paging
- Find me/follow me
- Customer provided hold music
- Customer Portal Access (for customer billing, and system management)

**10. Does your system include international calling?**

**Our Answer:** International calling to Canada is included in our minutes. Calling permission to other international countries is enabled by default with our system. However, you will be billed for international minutes separately on your next invoice.



We can disable this feature at your request if you do not want to allow international calls other than to Canada to be placed.

**11. Will it work with my current firewall, router, Internet and network settings?**

**Our Answer:** Once we complete our assessment of your network and bandwidth, you will know with 100% certainty if your current configuration will support our phone system. And, if it will not, our quote will include the cost to buy the needed equipment outright. This way you will know all the details required to ensure a successful transition to a VoIP service.

**12. Does your system support faxing?**

**Our Answer:** We offer a hosted fax service. Faxes are converted to PDF files and then sent to the e-mail address configured for the associated number. We also configure authorized users who can send faxes via our fax application or in our online fax portal by attaching the fax as a PDF or MS Word document (.tiff format).

For customers who want to utilize their existing fax machines or fax-enabled copiers, we have an option to include a hardware appliance that will connect to your standard fax equipment as well.

**13. Do you offer a trial phone we can test in our office before making a commitment?**

**Our Answer:** Yes! Once we have completed the network and bandwidth assessment, we are happy to provide a demo phone so you can get a feel for the phone and its features.

**14. If my employees need to work from home, how does your phone system accommodate that? How does the transition happen if we suddenly have to work remote due to a covid-type shutdown or other disaster?**

**Our Answer:** Our phones are configured to work from anywhere. If your employees need to work from home or a remote location, all they have to do is unplug their phones from the office wall jack and plug them into their home Internet or connect them to their home WiFi as they would a laptop or PC. Since our phone system supports 911 emergency calling, we do require that you let us know the physical address where each phone will be relocated so we can ensure that any emergency calls made from the phones will provide the correct 911 location information.

**15. Who does the transition to the new phone and how long will I be down during the cut over?**

**Our Answer:** We handle 100% of the transition for you and will provide a seamless transition from your current system to our phones with LITTLE OR NO DOWNTIME. We use a staged process of setting up the phones with temporary numbers first, configure them to your business and test them thoroughly before going “live.” We can do this on a site-by-site basis or phone-by-phone if needed. When the port occurs, your new phones will start to ring. The end result is ZERO downtime or lost calls.

**16. What type of training do you offer for my employees using the phone?**

**Our Answer:** Once we configure and install your new phone system, our engineers will show each user how to perform basic functions like setting up their voice mail, recording their mailbox greeting, placing calls on hold and transferring calls to other extensions. We also provide a customized user guide with instructions for using the phone system based on the features that have been configured for their installation. Finally, our LOCAL support staff are available to answer any questions and provide one-off training to users at any time.

**17. Can you SHOW me how to change office hours, how calls are routed, how to add a new employee, set up out-of-office, etc.?**

**Our Answer:** This is just part of the high-quality service we offer that helps us stand out from the “big box” phone system companies. We provide end user training to your staff, and we will also train your authorized staff on how to be self-sufficient with our phone system including an instruction manual so you can make changes simple at any time, quickly and easily via the customer portal. However, we also provide complete support for the phone system and are happy to make any changes you need if you simply want us to handle it for you.

**18. Can you provide me references from other RECENT clients you installed this phone system for?**

**Our Answer:** Absolutely! We are always happy to provide a list of customer references who can attest to the value, reliability and overall positive experience with our system. Just give us a call and we can provide them to you.

**19. Do I have to record my own voice mail and auto attendant messages or will you do that for me? Help me find voice talent? Music on hold?**

**Our Answer:** We offer solutions to help you record greetings for your business. We can also assist you with creating message scripts. All of this is part of the service we include with our phone system.

## **20. Does your system handle emergency 911 calls?**

**Our Answer:** Yes, we enable 911 calling on all extensions and ensure that the physical location for each extension is set up with 911 service providers. For this reason, we ask that our customers notify us any time they are planning to move an extension to a new physical address, so we can ensure that emergency services have the correct physical address.

## **The Most Important Features To Look For**

As I shared earlier, almost all phone systems are the same. However, here are a few features you want to make sure are included or at least available:

### **Call Routing When The Internet Goes Down**

Another key feature to have is instantaneous, automatic fail over for phone calls if and when the Internet goes down. Providers that understand the critical role a phone system plays for most businesses will also have an option for cellular backup to your Internet service so you can keep your phones working even if the Internet goes down.

### **Automated Attendant**

The Automated Attendant feature allows you to create simple or complex menus so callers can be directed to the appropriate person or department without having to talk with an operator.

### **After-Hours And Holiday Call Flows**

Almost every business has times when they want incoming calls to be handled differently. The After-Hours and Holiday Call Flow features allow you to have calls handled differently based on the day of the week, time of day or holiday.

### **Voice Mails E-mailed To You**

This is a feature many of our clients don't ask for (initially) but later tell us is one of their favorites. Here's how it works: when a call comes in for someone who is on the phone or away from their desk, most phone systems provide the ability for the caller to leave a voice mail. With this feature, the voice mail is also converted to a sound file, attached to an e-mail message and sent to the e-mail address configured for that extension so the extension owner can listen to their voice mail, even if they are out of the office.

## **Fax To E-mail**

Wouldn't it be nice to have your phone system automatically recognize that an incoming call is actually a fax message and just convert the incoming fax to a PDF, then e-mail it to you? That is exactly what this feature provides. With it, any inbound phone number can be set up to receive faxes.

## **Paging**

This feature allows the speakerphone on any handset to be used as a paging system for the business. Another extension can just press the Page button and make an announcement that is broadcast over all phones configured for paging.

With an interface adapter, an existing premise-based loudspeaker paging system can also be integrated with our service.

## **Call Center Queueing**

In businesses where there is a high volume of incoming calls, you may want the ability to have the callers automatically placed in a queue, with a custom on-hold message playing until the next agent is available. This feature provides this function and will automatically send the call to the next available agent.

## **Find Me – Follow Me**

This is a customer favorite, especially for those users who are outside their office on a regular basis. This feature allows your office phone to ring on your cell phone or laptop either simultaneously or in sequence (office phone first, then cell, then laptop) so you never miss a phone call again!

## **Custom Hold Music, Information Or Promotion**

This is one of our most requested features because it allows you to deliver a message to callers about services you offer, promotions you are running or to simply wish them a Happy Holiday Season. This is a far better option than basic "elevator" music, which can aggravate someone who doesn't share the same taste in music as you.

## **The Next Step: A Free Phone And Communication Assessment**

Are you ready to make a move to a new phone system? Curious if you could save money on your phone and Internet bills? Do you HATE your current VoIP system and want to find a replacement – but are stuck in a contract you don't know how to get out of without paying huge fines and early cancellation fees?

Then we'd like to offer you a free Phone and Communication Assessment to answer these questions:

- **Is your current network environment (bandwidth, firewall, router, etc.) able to handle a VoIP system?** We have a diagnostic tool we can run on your computer network to ensure a VoIP phone would work. We'll reveal any additional costs you might have to incur in advance so you're not unpleasantly surprised AFTER you buy.
- **Is it possible for you to get out of a long-term contract with a phone system that you HATE?** We'll review your contract and tell you if and what can be done. Sometimes there are loopholes that give you an out. In some cases, we can negotiate on your behalf to get you out for significantly reduce the fees. In some cases, the NEW system will save you enough money to more than cover the initial payment of early cancellation. We'll go over all of this for you when we meet.
- **Can you save money on your phone and Internet bill?** It's very common for us to save our clients between 20% and 40% without sacrificing quality. As we said earlier, this is a highly competitive industry and vendors DO have unadvertised discounts and incentives you can take advantage of if you know where to look (and we do!).
- **Are you losing sales and opportunities because clients and prospects can't get to someone when they call your office?** Are prospects hanging up because they aren't getting to anyone live? How exactly ARE calls being handled in your office? Are clients calling your sales rep's personal cell phone, and is that acceptable to you? We recommend you conduct a "secret shop" exercise to identify details on how your customers and prospects are being handled when they call your office (you may be shocked).

It is very likely, you have a good sense about your business communications, by getting feedback from employees, clients, and your own calls to the office. Use this information to decide as to whether or not it makes good business sense to modify, or upgrade your phone service.

We hope you become a client, but if not, that's okay too! You have my personal guarantee that absolutely NO high-pressure sales tactics will be used at any point during our engagement. We simply want this to be a delightful, informative and positive experience for you.

## **Why Choose Us?**

### **1. 100% Money-Back Guarantee**

All of our phone systems come with a 90-day money-back guarantee. Let us install your new phone system, set it up and get you productive. If you later discover the system doesn't work for you, or if you simply don't like it for ANY reason, let us know within the first 90 days and we'll 1) remove the phones, 2) help you transition to a new phone, and 3) refund what you paid us for the phone, all for free, and without any hassles or problems.

### **2. No Hidden Fees, 100% Transparent Billing And Quoting**

When you buy a phone system from us, we guarantee that 100% of all fees and costs associated with the new phone will be on that quote and you won't be unpleasantly surprised later with unexpected costs, fees and taxes. This is why we do a comprehensive Assessment before quoting you, reviewing your phone contract, phone bill, Internet service and network, as well as how you use the phone.

### **3. We're Local And Will Set The Phone Up For You**

Many other phone system companies ship you their phone in a box and leave you to set it up (good luck!). When you purchase a phone system from us, we'll come on-site to set it up, configure it, move you from the old system to the new one and ensure everything is working perfectly before we leave. 100% done-for-you.

### **4. No Finger-Pointing**

Since we are IT pros as well as phone system experts, we won't point the finger at your IT person for the phones not working. We can actually troubleshoot those issues for you, owning the problem instead of shrugging it off as "not our problem."

### **5. Lifetime Support, As Well As Adds, Changes**

Our phone system is really easy to use and we'll show you how to make adds, changes and updates. However, if you prefer we do it for you, we will make those changes for you.

### **6. Local Setup, Configuration And Training**

As part of our service, our technicians will do everything to get your phones installed, set up, transported and working!