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Communication 2.0: Making the Right Call on a New Business Phone System

Businesses don't buy phone systems for fun. If you're in the market, you're probably responding to an event, such as a move or serious problems with an existing system. Perhaps, you are looking to gain the communications advantages of modern solutions.

What's more, most companies don't buy phone systems very often. On average, businesses change phone systems about every seven years. Consequently, not very many people are experts at researching phone system options and selecting the one that is right for them.

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Technology continues to change the way people communicate. We're more mobile, agile and always-on than ever. We've got desk phones, mobile phones, email, voicemail, instant messaging, video and more. Taking the friction out of all this communication is an important responsibility of business phone system buyers.

This ebook is designed to help by walking you through the major steps of a business phone system purchase. We'll explain the different types of systems, some of the new features that can be included, and how to make an advanced system a much more manageable item in your budget.

Getting started

The days of being tied to a desk are long gone. Now, the office is wherever your people are; and they need a phone system that can travel with them.

This is not some "nice-to-have." Employees have come to expect the ability to work remotely. They want to be able to use their mobile devices for business when they are away from the office. Employees need to be able chat easily with colleagues who also may be geographically dispersed; and they want to be able to meet through video conferencing.

Business leaders, meanwhile, are looking for reporting that will help them drive efficiency and maximize returns on their technology investments.

As you begin the process of purchasing a new business phone system, the key is to identify – and prioritize – the capabilities that are most important to your organization.

> " *The office is wherever your people are* "

Common drivers for new phone system purchases

1. Moving to a new location.
2. Expanding rapidly.
3. Standardizing systems across multiple sites.
4. Addressing failures in aging legacy systems.
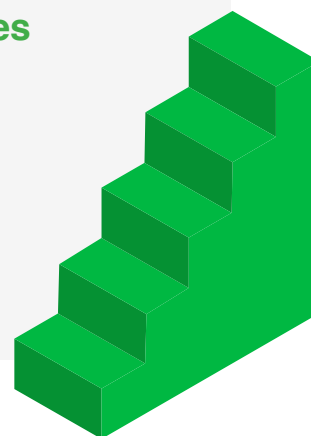
Identifying Capabilities

As an organization begins planning for a new business phone system, several key capabilities should be put on the table for consideration.

Softphones — In our post-cubicle world, people regularly work remotely, sometimes very remotely. Softphones allow employees to receive phone calls over their computers, enabling true telecommuting. With softphones, employees use the business phone system even when they are hundreds of miles away from their nearest co-worker.

Mobile device support — Employees can make calls from their personal mobile devices with their business phone numbers, meaning they don't have to reveal their personal cell phone numbers to clients, prospects, partners and vendors. They can give one phone number to contacts, allowing them to be found regardless of whether they're at their desks, at home or on the road.

Reporting — Modern phone systems can help you staff smarter and monitor productivity. Being able to create call logs allows you to predict what kind of call volumes you can expect at a certain time of day, day of the week or time of year. A modern system will also integrate with a CRM system so you can automatically insert records of phone calls and track the productivity of your sales representatives, service people, and other staff.
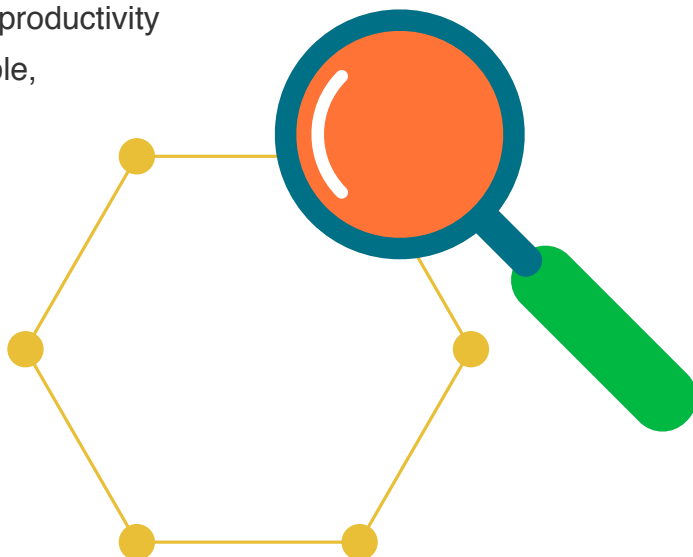
Enhancing Collaboration

A modern phone system changes the way employees collaborate. Presence features allow users to see easily who is available for a quick meeting. Video conferencing can make that meeting more efficient. A new phone system can even change the way you think of voicemail.

Unified communications — Businesses and their employees need to be able to do more than make phone calls. They also need to share screens, send emails and instant messages, and access data seamlessly. A fully integrated UC platform allows a business to do all of those things in a unified interface.

HD video collaboration and screen sharing — Hold high-definition video conferences with up to 25 participants from anywhere. Choose a computer, smartphone, or tablet. Collaborate with teams using screen sharing. Eliminate separate, expensive video conferencing and online meeting services.

Contact center features — Not every business has a contact center, but most can benefit from contact center functionality. Fonality includes Unlimited Queue for all employees.

Voicemail-to-email transcription — A voicemail-to-email transcription service makes it easy to read, respond to and archive voicemail messages. Voicemail transcription makes it easy for employees to be responsive wherever you are.

Heads Up Display — Fonality's Heads Up Display makes it easy to manage calls and connect with teams using built in presence and instant messaging. The Heads Up Display helps everyone be more efficient and effective, saving up to two hours a day in productivity.

Weighing Deployment Options

Technology has pushed the modern business phone system out of the phone closet and into the server closet or even the cloud. The physical has become the virtual.

Instead of the traditional "telco" speak, you may now hear terms like softswitch — the software that directs incoming calls to the right extension, automated attendant or voicemail box — and control panel. That's the interface that lets you administer and manage your phone system.

With the modern business phone system relying so much on technology, a key question companies need to answer before deciding on which type of system fits best is what technology resources do they have available. That answer will go along way to determining if an on-premises system, cloud system, or a hybrid of the two is best for them.
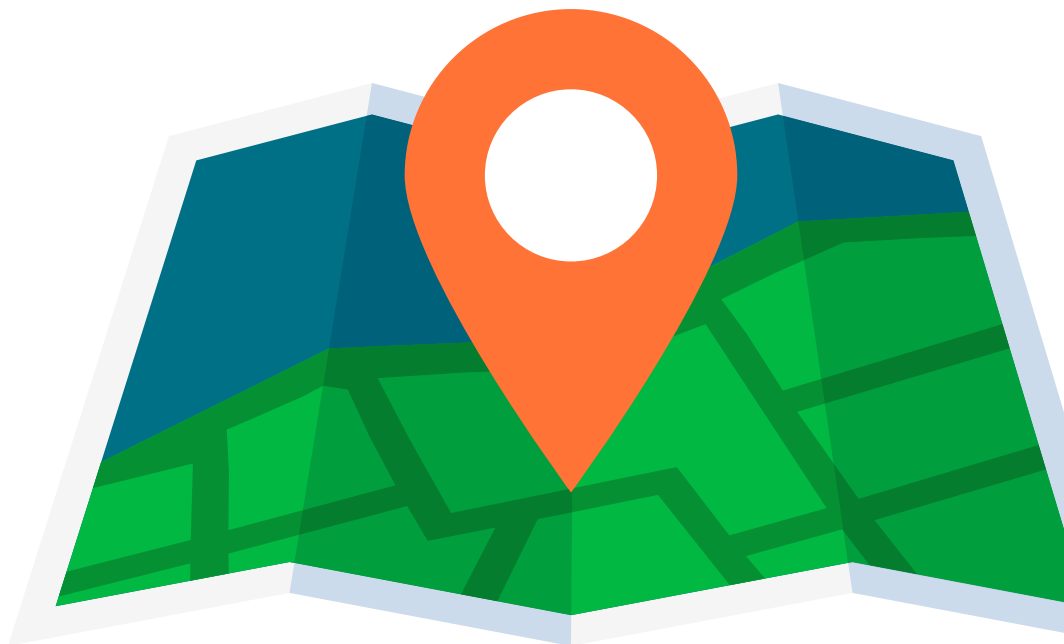
Deployment Options

- **On-premises** – Servers and other equipment at your location
- **Cloud-based** – Technology owned and managed by the vendor
- **Hybrid** – VoIP service with failover to traditional telephone lines

Deployment Option: On-Premises System

Just like it sounds, an on-premises solution is servers and other equipment at your location, allowing you to control your communications on-site — even maintaining your current voice provider with options to use VoIP, PRI, or analog services if you choose.

An on-premises system is highly customizable to fit your precise business needs, allowing greater control for increased redundancy and disaster-recovery options.

An on-premises system is recommended when your Internet service is unreliable or you have a dedicated team of IT professionals who can manage the system.

Deployment Option: Cloud-Based System

For smaller businesses and those with access to broadband Internet capabilities but no dedicated IT personnel, a cloud solution provides all of the same features that in the past would only have been available to large enterprises.

It is also less of a strain on the pocketbook to implement a cloud system than it is to invest in the capital expenditure of servers and equipment that would sit on-site.

Companies can lower operating expenses by 40 percent or more and eliminate the risk of technology obsolescence by avoiding the need to

" a cloud solution provides all of the same features that in the past would only have been available to large enterprises "

hire and train technical staff. You'd only be asked to manage the users, not the equipment, and that's done through a simple, user-friendly control panel. The technology and the back end of the phone system is managed by the cloud hosting company.

Deployment Option: Hybrid System

A hybrid solution combines the best of both worlds as it's an on-premises system that's hosted in the cloud. Call management is still managed at your location. You may have a cloud-based phone service or more traditional PRI lines from the telephone company, but all of the administration and reporting and the additional services reside in the cloud.

That means all of your administrative services become available from anywhere. Let's say the power goes out in your building. You can still access those administrative services to reroute calls to another office or to home phones or cell phones. You could even failover to a VoIP solution.

With a hybrid solution you can also run your primary voice services through VoIP and then failover to traditional lines. So, if you were to lose Internet access you wouldn't lose a minute of availability.

> " *A hybrid solution combines the best of both worlds* "

Considering Phone Types

A modern business phone system needs phones that are able to handle VoIP calls and servers on which to run the system. There are desk phones to meet the needs of every user.

- Desktop IP phones are well suited for everyday phone users. These phones require minimal customization and are extremely easy to set up.

- Executive IP phones are perfect for management users who wish to support up to four lines. These phones are built with additional programmable hard keys and a more advanced user interface to satisfy the needs of executives and frequent phone users.

- Reception IP phone models are designed to appeal to attendant users, who require advanced features, applications, and multiple line support. These phones come out of the box with up to 16 programmable hard keys so that calls can be routed with ease.

- Conference phones can deliver superb voice quality, advanced audio processing, and all the features that make conference calls seem as natural as being in the same room.

- With a wireless phone, your employees are no longer tethered to their desks. A repeater can even be added if your employees need to extend the range past the phone's standard 150 feet indoors.

Selecting a Pricing Model

Traditionally, deploying a phone system was a significant capital expense. Phone lines were purchased in groups of 23, so you'd start by estimating how many groups of 23 you needed. Then you'd have to buy the servers and software to manage that number of lines. You'd also have to purchase the licensing and maintenance on that software.

All told, a phone system could cost in the six figures just to set up. That doesn't include the cost of maintenance over the life of the system. Few growing businesses have that kind of money available for a single expense.

Subscription pricing makes moving to a modern phone system much more affordable. One small set-up fee and then a low monthly payment can make an enterprise-level phone system a reality for growing businesses.

> *Subscription pricing makes moving to a modern phone system much more affordable*

Choosing a Vendor

Picking the right partner to provide your phone system should start with research. Look at the customers that provider is serving. Are those companies similar to yours? Are those customers happy?

> *learn about your potential partner's "churn" rate.*

Also, learn about your potential partner's "churn" rate. How many of the company's customers leave them after their contract expires? You want to find companies like Fonality that have low churn rates. It's a sure sign that customers are satisfied with the reliability of their phone systems, the effectiveness of the support, and the usefulness of the features.

About Fonality

Fonality has built its business around helping growing businesses use their phone systems to become more competitive and successful. It has been developing Unified Communications systems since 2004 serving businesses of all sizes around the world.

The company's engineering team developed the Fonality Heads Up Display interface and patented hybrid solution to meet the unique needs of emerging companies.

Fonality provides business phone systems and contact center solutions designed exclusively for growing businesses. Fonality is the only provider that can deliver the same user experience in the cloud and on-premise, with innovative features that help smaller businesses save time, communicate more efficiently and reduce costs.

For more information, visit www.Fonality.com.au or call 1300-874-928.