

Six Questions to Answer When Buying a Phone System

In addition to the most comprehensive portfolio of voice communications, data and wireless networking products in the industry, we at ICON and Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise seek to provide the absolute best resources for our customers and potential customers that are shopping for a new phone system. The best solutions go to the most informed buyers, so in this document we've compiled a list of questions to answer to help you both before and during the buying process.



1. How will you use your phone system?

Before the process really gets underway there are a few basic questions to ask.

Why is now the right time to purchase a new communications system?

There are several reasons that typically push companies to consider purchasing a new phone system:

- Aging phone system becoming more expensive to operate.
- Phone system not providing the required functionality.

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- Company has outgrown the phone system.

In general, older phone systems are built like tanks and continue to work for some time. However, today's modern phone system offers a great potential to improve productivity and customer experience, operate more efficiently and provide a greater suite of features and integration to other subsystems.

Should your answer to the above question be, "yes," and now is the right time to consider purchasing a new phone system, it is important to take a detailed look at your actual usage patterns to determine a baseline of requirements. Important factors to consider are listed below.

How does your company use its communications system?

- What is the maximum number of concurrent calls the system needs to support?
- Are there times of the day or seasonal times when your company experiences a dramatic increase or decrease in call traffic?
- What is the percentage of inbound calls vs. outbound calls?
- Do you have people who are often away from their desks or travelling but still need to access the communications system?
- Do you often receive more calls than you have people to answer?
- Would you like your callers to be routed by department or by



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a dialed number?

- Would you like your callers to be greeted by an automated attendant or a live person?
- Does your phone system integrate with any other business equipment or software such as CRM software?

The answers to these questions will help steer your decision towards the products and services that best suit your business needs. Knowing your usage requirements will also help weed out vendors that cannot address your company's unique requirements.

2. What do your customers and staff need from the new phone system?

Business phone systems are available in a variety of configurations and can be adapted to work with almost any business or application. Making the right choice when purchasing a new phone system can make your employees more efficient and make it easier for your customers and suppliers to reach you. To help make this process easier some of the most common use cases are summarized below.

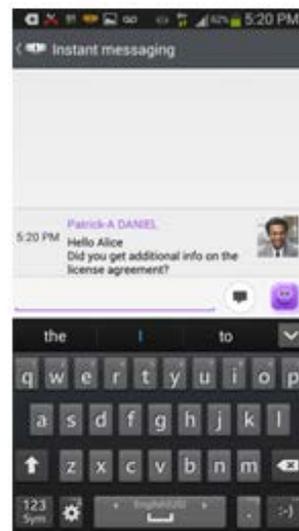
What types of users do you have?

1. **Digital Telephone Users.** Digital telephones provide access to basic and advanced features such as multiple line appearance, hold, conference, transfer, park and direct station dialing. Digital phones have been surpassed by IP phones in popularity in recent years but are still useful business tools, especially in buildings that are not wired for IP telephony. Digital telephones are available in a number of different styles with models that feature multiple-line displays, speakerphones for hands-free operation and programmable feature keys.

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2. **IP Telephone Users.** IP telephones offer many of the same benefits as traditional digital telephones with some important enhancements including touch-screen color displays, enhanced user interface with access to applications similar to those found on today's smart phones and peer-to-peer video capability. IP phones also simplify moves, adds and changes as they are typically programmable through a web browser and need only an Ethernet connection to operate rather than a fixed port as required for digital and analog sets.
3. **Softphone Users** may install a multimedia, fully integrated telephony application that provides access to the communications system from their desktop computer, tablet or smart phone. Softphones emulate a business telephone and are ideal for remote workers.
4. **Mobile Users.** Mobile users can be divided into two subcategories, *external* and *internal mobile users*. *External Mobile Users* can access the communications system through their smart phone or tablet. This can

be as simple as simultaneous ringing of their smart phone and their desk phone, or more advanced when an app such as the one pictured to the right is used to access system features including call control, voice messaging, contacts, chat and station-to-station dialing.



Internal mobile users have the

ability to access their calls from anywhere in the building or on campus using a wireless extension based on DECT or Wi-Fi technology.

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5. **Analog** extensions are required in most companies. While use is limited, analog extensions are most commonly used to support fax machines, single-line telephones or subsystems such as nurse call systems that work over an analog extension.

3. What type of features and services are required?

Traditional phone systems come with hundreds of features. While not all of these features are beneficial to every business, it is important to evaluate some of the most commonly used features to determine if they are “must haves,” “nice to have” or not required.

Which features and functions are most important to your business?

ACD (Automated Call Distribution): Often thought of as a “call center” feature but ACD features can greatly improve call processing efficiency and customer service for almost any business. Today’s solutions typically provide ACD features optimized for small and informal call centers as well as scalable options for large enterprise deployments.

Automated Attendant: Greets callers with a recorded message and gives options to route them to the right person or department.

Call Divert: When a call is ringing at an extension, pressing the Call Divert key allows you to quickly send the call to another destination such as an extension, department or voicemail.

Call Forward: Used to forward calls based on incoming line or extension dialed to another number, voice mail, or group. For example, sending all callers to an answering service or programming your extension to forward calls to your cell phone, voice mailbox or another extension.

Call Hold / Call Park: The capability to manage multiple calls by putting one call on hold in order to speak to a second party. Call park allows the held call to be picked up at another extension.

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Dial-By-Name Directory: Typically provides two levels of benefit, (1) Customers can access the dial-by-name directory via the auto attendant. (2) Staff can dial-by-name to quickly call customers and colleagues from their desk phone or mobile phone.

Direct Station Dialing: Dialing another system extension by pressing a programmable key. On most desk phones the programmable key provides busy lamp field indication – lighting or flashing an LED to indicate the other party is on a call or in DND.

Do Not Disturb (DND): Pressing a key on a desk phone to prevent calls from ringing at that extension.

Last Number Redial: Pressing a key on the desk phone, or choosing the option from a mobility application, instantly dials the last number that called your extension.



Messaging Services: The capability to send and manage text messages and voice messages through the phone system. Today, most hosted communications solutions include a voice mailbox with every seat.

Mobility: Allows users to access the communications system from outside their office from their mobile phone, tablet, PC softphone or remote desk phone.

Multi-party Conference Calling: The ability to start *ad hoc conferences* by adding a caller to a conversation and *meet-me conferencing*, allowing a group of people to dial into a conference bridge.

Music On Hold: Programmable music feeds that can be used to play messages or music to caller's dialing into the system or waiting on hold.

SIP: SIP is a standards-based communications protocol that is one of the most common methods for delivering Voice Over IP service. There are many advantages to SIP including scalability, portability, interoperability and price.

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Speed Dial: When phone numbers are dialed on a regular basis the speed dial feature reduces the number of key presses required to dial the number by allowing them to be assigned to a programmable key or dialed by pressing a key plus a short code.

Voicemail to Email: When a new voice message is received, it is forwarded to your email address as a message with an audio (wav file) attachment. As an option, some systems offer transcription services as well.

4. Who will manage your phone system?

Will you rely on a trained, authorized technician to service your phone system? Would you like to manage your own phone system? Does your IT staff serve in this capacity? Or, are you interested in a managed service where all of the ongoing support and maintenance is included? Each of these options is available based on the needs of your company.

Is a managed service right for your business?

- Today, hosted, or “cloud based” phone systems are available where a low monthly payment covers the cost of the equipment, features and ongoing support and maintenance. If you are choosing a hosted solution it is important to qualify if it is a managed service offering with a local support presence. Some of the “low budget” solutions are do-it-yourself where the equipment is shipped to you and you are responsible to either install the system yourself or pay for support by the hour.
- One of the more flexible options is to pursue a solution that can be deployed as a hosted solution, installed on-premises, or hybrid where some services are deployed in the cloud, other services on premises.

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5. Will your anticipated future needs differ from your current needs?

In order to make sure the buying decision you make today will meet your communications needs for the next seven years (the average life cycle of a communications system) it is important to consider your anticipated future needs.

Do you plan to expand your business by adding employees or business units?

Make sure the system you choose is scalable to account for your anticipated growth. Also evaluate the capability of the system to route calls to the proper department or business unit via automated attendant or manual transfer. Will you add new satellite offices or a large team

of mobile workers in the future? Determine up front if the phone system can provide feature transparency between offices and inter-office station-to-station dialing.



6. Deploying your new solution

Once you have determined your needs from the new communications system, the next step is gathering quotes and picking a solution provider. It is important to qualify exactly what level of service you are being offered as different vendors provide dramatically different levels of service.

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What level of service does the solution provider offer?

- Does the supplier provide a comprehensive installation package and was this included as part of the quote?
- Has the workflow and deployment schedule been carefully evaluated, planned and reviewed by both you and the solution provider?
- Post installation, what level of support is included and how do you access the provider's support services?
- Does the price include any regularly scheduled service and maintenance?
- How and when will future upgrades be installed?
- Once your new system is installed and operational, will your staff be thoroughly trained on the new system?

About Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise

Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise (ALE) is a leading provider of enterprise communications solutions and services, from the office to the cloud, marketed under the Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise brand. Building on an established heritage of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit, ALE operates globally with 2700+ employees in 100+ countries worldwide, with US headquarters in Calabasas, CA and world-wide headquarters located near Paris, France. For more information visit <http://enterprise.alcatel-lucent.com/>

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About ICON

ICON Voice Networks is a leading-edge provider of communications systems, network infrastructure equipment and hosted services specializing in voice, video, mobility, monitoring and alerting. We provide customers highly reliable solutions that integrate voice processing with other office monitoring and notification systems, providing an integrated solution engineered from the core. In addition to development, ICON Voice Networks is a master distributor of IP-PBXs, unified communications systems, hosted voice services, network switching and routing and wireless LAN technology. Serving a growing community of over 250 authorized resellers ICON offers the highest level of technical support, sales support and implementation services in the industry. For more information please visit www.iconvn.com.



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