

What's the Right Phone System for You?

Ask these questions to assure your phone service is as efficient as possible.

By Jim Gustke

Many in the nonprofit world have switched from traditional phone lines to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) to run their organizations. Also called IP telephony, VoIP is a group of technologies that let you make calls using a broadband internet connection instead of a regular (or analog) phone line. VoIP uses numerous features already built into the system and comes with substantial cost savings. To choose the best VoIP provider for your organization, ask these questions:

Is It Scalable?

With the increase in employee turnover in most organizations today, you must be able to scale your phone service up and down as needed. Ask:

How long does it take to add a new user?

What's involved in removing a user?

How does pricing change as you add or remove users?

Is It Easy to Manage?

To monitor your VoIP service, you'll need management tools and reports. Ask:

Is there a single cloud-based management portal or tool you can use to make changes?

Can you make updates, changes, or customizations from anywhere?

What types of reports are available (for example, calling reports, VoIP call quality information)?

Does It Offer All the Features You Need?

VoIP providers vary on features and capabilities. Beyond making calls, your organization may need additional features, including a mobile app, live chat messaging, and video conferencing. To determine which features and capabilities you need, talk with the employees who make and receive the most calls. Once you have a list, you can better choose the plan that meets your needs.

How Is the Voice Quality?

Many technological factors affect voice quality. For example, if employees have inadequate bandwidth, they may have problems during calls, or if a provider routes calls through a data center far from where the call originated, that could impact voice quality. Ask:

Does the provider offer high-definition (HD) voice, which may make it easier to understand people on conference calls?

“How does pricing change as you add or remove users?”

Does the VoIP service offer handsets? The hardware in VoIP phones affects the ease of access for many features. If handsets are important to employees, ask the VoIP provider what devices they support.

How Easy Is It to Set Up Service?

Some people in your organization may need help setting up new technologies, so it's important to evaluate how easy it is to put the system in place. Ask:

Do you have to buy additional hardware, or can you use your current hardware (such as desk phones, employee laptops, and smartphones)?

Have you reviewed the VoIP provider's documentation? Check to see if the provider offers up-to-date manuals, videos, and other online resources to make set-up easy.

Can you install the service yourself, or does it require a technician?

Does It Support Remote Work?

Remote and hybrid work practices are widespread and should be supported by your VoIP provider. Does the service offer mobile apps, making it easy for employees to place and receive calls from their preferred devices, and advanced features like video conferencing?


Does It Improve Callers' Experiences?

As organizations grow, having a phone system that aligns with the public's expectations is critical. Unlike old-style landlines, VoIP systems come with powerful features to make the right impression for those who call your organization. For instance, the VoIP system may be able to answer callers' questions, provide the information they need, and use automatic routing to send calls to the most appropriate person. All these sophisticated features can improve customer service and reduce call waiting times.

How Much Money Can You Save?

You'll likely cut your telecommunication costs by switching to VoIP. You can find a savings calculator at ooma.com to find out how much you can reduce your monthly bill.

Does the Provider Have a Good Reputation?

Identify VoIP leaders by looking for high ratings from publications like *PC Magazine*, which annually surveys readers and makes Business Choice Awards. 

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“Talk with the employees who make the most calls.”



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