

Moving to a new business phone system

A guide to cloud-based phone systems and how to choose the best one for your business requirements

Introduction

Phone systems are a necessity for all mid-market businesses, essential for maintaining contact internally and externally.

The average phone system typically lasts between six to eight years. After this point, it's either out of maintenance or lacking the features you need to really run your business effectively. If you need to upgrade your business phone system, you will likely find that there is a whole array of new solutions available now, compared to seven or eight years ago.

New software-based communication solutions no longer need dedicated hardware in the server room anymore, because the whole system runs in the cloud.

You may not even need physical desk phones anymore because many phone solutions often include a 'soft phone' or

'client' which can be installed on your laptop or mobile, turning that device into your phone.

Modern phone solutions also now offer more than just 'voice'. They have a full range of Unified Communications (UC) capabilities such as instant messaging, presence, video calling, collaboration tools and more, designed to maximise productivity.

This guide covers:

- Common issues with traditional phone systems and how to prevent them from reoccurring with your new system
- How cloud-based phone systems benefit your business
- Which phone system should you choose?
- How to evaluate your options
- Your new phone system checklist

Preventing the same phone system issues from reoccurring

If you're considering a new business phone system, it probably doesn't make sense to purchase a like-for-like replacement - particularly if you're experiencing some issues with your current set-up. You could also be missing out on a valuable opportunity to bring a range of new functionalities into your business, which could greatly support your teams' productivity.

Before you start looking at options, think about what's missing from your current set-up and what you need from your next phone system.

Ask yourself these questions when considering your next system

- How many phone calls do you miss because the call goes to someone who is out of office or because all the lines are busy?
- Do you have different systems in different offices, so there is no consistency in features available for staff?
- Is it difficult to transfer customer calls between sites?
- What happens when your phone network goes down? Are you able to continue taking calls?
- Have you ever suffered a network or equipment failure that has stopped inbound or outbound calls?
- Are you concerned about having to find replacements for elements of your phone system if something goes wrong?
- When you bought your last phone system, did you think you were getting a good deal – or did you find out there were a lot of hidden costs after buying the basic system?

- Do you want to avoid these hidden costs with the maintenance of the system this time around?
- Is it difficult for remote workers to call people in the business simply because they're out of the office?
- Is the handset very complicated, so staff often end up dropping calls?
- Do remote workers feel detached when they're working away from the office?
- Do staff use their personal mobiles for business, so you're unsure if they're working or not whilst in the office?
- Does your phone system portray the professional image you want for your business?
- Do customers ever complain that it's difficult to get through to the right department when phoning in?
- Is call quality consistently poor?

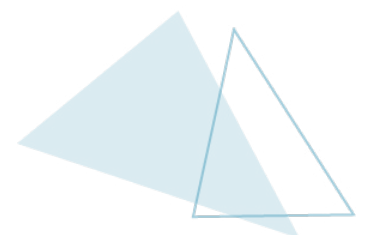
If one or more of these questions are resonating with you, then you're not alone.

Some of the most common issues with

phone systems include limited features, outdated hardware, low call quality, complexity and high expenses.

When considering your next phone system, you should prioritise these questions into the ones that are the most important for your business. What is essential and what are the 'nice to haves'?

Next, we'll look at how modern phone systems can deliver for your business. This section will focus specifically on cloud-based systems as they are usually the most suitable for companies with less than 500 employees - particularly for those who are spread across multiple sites.



8 ways cloud-based phone systems help your business

1. Predictable Costs

Understandably, cost is often one of the top concerns when investing in a new phone system. Most cloud systems will come with a fixed minutes and user plan. You pay a certain amount per user, which includes the minutes, making it easy to budget for.

2. Flexible

With cloud, you just buy what you need - there's no need to over specify in order to buy a specific consideration. If your needs change in the future, you can simply add on to it. You only pay for what you're using and, as your business grows, you can quickly add more users without the need for extra physical lines.

3. Highly Available

It's important that every business plans for the worst case scenarios. The last

thing you need, when disaster strikes, is for your phone lines to be completely out of action. Yet, this is often the case with traditional phone systems. With cloud, you can work from anywhere. Your customers and prospects can reach you as normal, without knowing your office is out of action.

4. Consistent for Users

If your business has evolved, perhaps opening new sites or acquiring other businesses, then you may have ended up with a multitude of different phone systems - which all work in different ways. With the cloud, systems work the same everywhere. Office workers, mobile workers and remote workers will all have access to the same features and functionality

5. Increased Efficiency

Cloud-based phone systems can

integrate with your IT systems, enabling users to 'click to dial' straight out a web page or directory listing. Many systems also integrate with cloud-based CRM and customer service platforms, enabling your business to track activity and become more efficient.

6. Professional Image

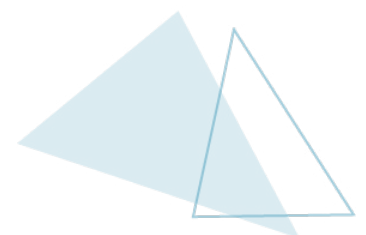
Cloud phone systems come with a huge number of features which, until recently, were only available on highly expensive enterprise systems. Features like auto attendants, hunt groups, and a range of other call routing features allow you to present a professional image to your customers, partners and prospects.

7. Greater Productivity

With cloud-based phone systems you can implement productivity features that will allow you staff to communicate and collaborate more easily and effectively than ever before. You can dramatically increase your business's productivity with features such as room-based collaboration, conference calling and instant messaging.

8. Supports Agile Working

Some of your employees are probably already working remotely or flexibly, and it's expected that this trend will increase in the coming years. However, it's important that remote and mobile workers still feel connected to the business. Cloud-based systems allow employees to remain connected to the main system. Employees can use soft phone applications to transform their mobile, laptop or other smart device into their 'desk phone', so they are reachable for colleagues and customers, wherever they are working.



Which cloud phone system should you choose?

There are many available cloud-based phone systems to choose from. It's important to understand the underlying technology - or platform - behind your service provider. The platform determines the provider's ability to innovate - and at what speed - and drive the biggest impact for your business.

Some phone system providers base their service on freeware code that has been available for many years on the internet. Unfortunately, many of these free-ware-based services have issues with quality and security, which could ultimately cost you.

At the other end of the spectrum, you have highly industrialised platform which have been developed by specialist vendors. They deliver superior features, functionality and reliability and come with a proven track record.



How to evaluate your options

Here are some of the key questions you should ask the provider when evaluating options for your new cloud-based phone system.

Cost

- What's included in the minutes bundle?
- What's excluded what the minutes bundle?
- Are there any exit clauses in the service contract?
- Do you have to rent the phones for longer than the service contract?

Flexibility

- Can you add or remove users during the service contract?
- What is the process for adding or removing users? How easy is it to do?
- Is the price per users or device?

Availability

- Do remote workers have the same functionality and features as those who are working in the office?
- Is call quality the same for remote workers?

Usability

- Are the same features available on the phone, PC and mobile devices?
- Do you still have to rely on a physical desk phone?

Professionalism

- What support features are included? For example, auto attendant, on hold music, automatic call distribution, call queuing etc.
- If not, what are the additional costs for these features?

Productivity

- Does the system include features like conferencing, room-based collaboration and instant message and presence?
- Is there a limit on the number of users who can use these features simultaneously. For example, limits of the number of conference call attendees

Mobility

- Does the system support iOS and Android mobile devices?
- Can it support all the productivity features above when mobile?



Cloud Phone System Checklist

Ready to start looking at potential systems and providers? Here's a basic checklist to support you.

☐ Identify your business needs

Cloud and on-premise systems should have the same basic functionality: calls, voicemail, call routing etc. However, cloud systems tend to have additional specialist features which may be beneficial.

- Consider what features you have now
- Identify which features you would ideally like to have

☐ Calculate all potential costs

Depending on your cash flow, you may consider an Opex model that spreads out payment in a per user bundle.

- Does the 'all in call bundle' reflect your actual call usage?
- Do you have the budget to spend on a new telephony platform when required?
- What is the lifetime cost of the service when renting compared to buying?
- What hardware is required and how is this acquired?
- If rented, do rental costs outweigh the cost of system maintenance?
- Do you need to upgrade your internet to use the system?

☐ Test your network for readiness

If you want a successful transition, then you will need to ensure that your office data network and internet connection are ready to support your cloud-based phone system.

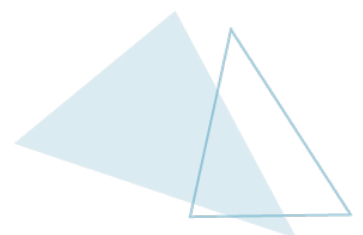
☐ Decide what you want and who will supply it

Find out exactly what level of service you are getting with your cloud-based telephone system.

- Can the service provider help you directly with issues that arise?
- What is the service provider responsible for you and what are your responsibilities?
- What level of support is included and what costs extra?
- What is the customer support policy?
- What are the response times and are there any SLAs in place?

☐ Time to start benefiting from your new cloud-based phone system!

Once you've reviewed your environment, determining which features you need if your phone systems, assessed the cost-value benefits and ensured you're clear on service levels then you can start to benefit from a cloud telephone system.



Conclusion

Upgrading your phone system has the potential transform your business, giving you access to a wealth of new features, helping to present a more professional image of your operations, and enabling your employees to be more productive and efficient.

If you feel like you have outgrown your current phone system and it is no longer delivering for you, then take some time to go through the questions we have outlined in this guide and establish your priorities and requirements before you begin to explore the available solutions.

Choosing a new phone system is a big decision. While the right system could make all the difference, an ill-suited one could prove very costly - and not just on the financial front. At QuoStar, we remove the risk by supporting businesses through the decision making process. From establishing business requirements and providing the necessary level of support during the system selection process, through to the deployment and ongoing management of your chosen phone system.

Contact our team today to arrange a free online review to discuss your requirements in more detail and we can help find the phone system that will transform your business for the better.

BOOK AN ONLINE REVIEW

Make the move to a cloud-based phone system today!

QuoStar helps businesses define their phone system requirement in order to select the most appropriate platform. Then, when you're ready, we can manage your migration to your new system.

See how much a cloud-based telephone system could save your business with a free online quote.

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