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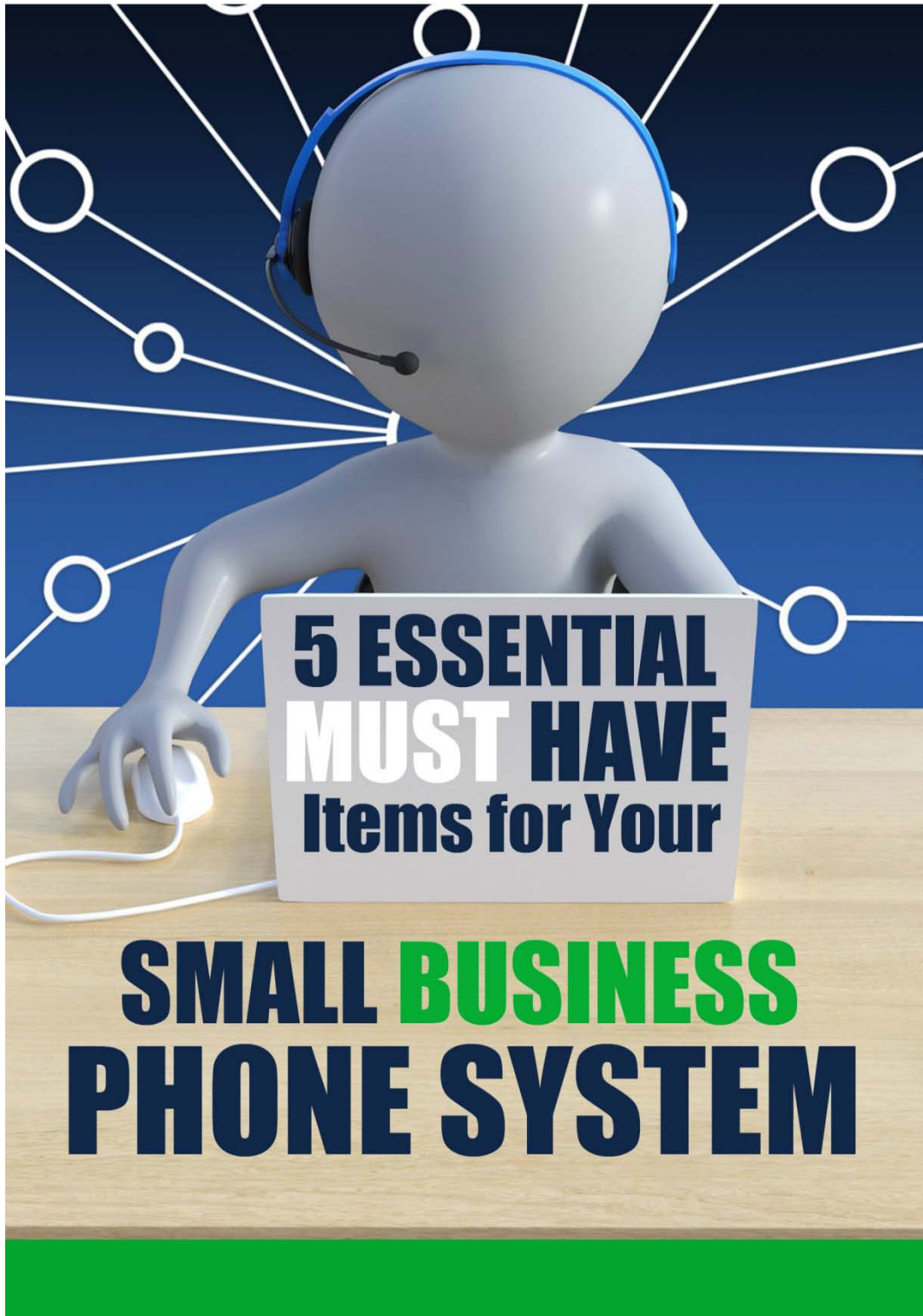

5 ESSENTIAL MUST HAVE Items for Your

SMALL BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEM

FIVE OR MORE ESSENTIAL MUST HAVE FEATURES FOR A SMALL BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEM

Introduction

In today's competitive corporate world, every business firm, whether small or large, has to make good use of modern communication technologies, in order to present a competitive and customer friendly approach. Effective communication has a key role to play in the success of every business, regardless of the medium used. As a faster medium of communication, small business phone systems have their own specific role to play in the smooth running of an organization.

Whenever we talk about small business phone systems, the technology that comes to our minds is the Private Branch Exchange system, commonly referred to as PBX. It can be called the private telephone exchange of any business firm or office, but is often recommended as an economical option for firms, where the number of employees is greater than forty.

For small business firms such as those with employee strength less than forty, a much smaller system is economical and viable. One such system is the Key System Unit (KSU) widely used in small offices. These key telephone systems have individual line selection options to connect to every phone attached to the network. For business firms having employee strength fewer than ten, the KSU-less system can be used. The telephones used in this system are equipped with the necessary technologies for business needs, and hence can operate themselves without the need of a central control system. The system is also easier for relocation due to lesser wiring and hardware requirements.

While selecting a small business phone system, a system which is flexible enough to include and handle more telephone traffic in the near future, should be installed. The compatibility of the phone system with the existing equipments such as fax machines, modems, credit card terminals, and conference equipments should also be checked. It is best to opt for telephones with built in SIP (Session Initiation Protocol). Telephones with SIP are future ready phones as they support VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), the technology which enables cheaper and faster transmission of voice over internet.

Small Business Phone Systems - High Quality Communication Products

For any business to be successful, a dedicated communication system is essential. It is profitable for any budding establishment to invest in such a phone system. Small business phone systems are high quality communication products on which SOHO companies can totally rely on. One can choose a phone service based on several factors such as the number of extensions required, cost, ease of use, flexibility and other relevant aspects. With small business telephone systems, as many extensions as required can be taken from a single phone line.

The common features provided in a hosted PBX system are auto attendant, virtual receptionist, caller ID, find me follow me call forwarding, call transfer, call screening, music on hold, voicemail, fax to email and so on. Among these, the find me follow me call forwarding facility is a unique feature present only in virtual VoIP PBX systems. The small business phone systems with all innovative features are definitely state-of-the-art communication products.

You can receive official calls when you are away from the office by programming the system with a list of alternate numbers through which you can be reached. The calls to the specific extension will be routed to the alternate numbers which can be a cell phone number or residence phone number. Calls that are not attended are forwarded to the voicemail system.

One can have a global business reach through virtual phone numbers offered by the hosted PBX phone service providers. And if one has existing local and toll free numbers, the small business phone systems can be connected to them. One can avoid establishing new branch offices in their favored locations and save on huge overheads with the aid of these virtual numbers. You can relocate to a new place without having to publish new telephone numbers. Your caller will still be able to contact you through these virtual phone numbers.

The service providers usually charge only a reasonable monthly service fee for the hosted PBX phone service. When employing the virtual PBX phone service, there is no need to purchase or install any equipment. All the hardware is maintained at the supplier's site itself. Owing to its high scalability, the communication lines and extensions can be extended as and when required.

The Right Small Business Phone System Can Be Good For Business

It may not be really necessary for the individual that he stay technologically up-to-date. For businesses though, it may be key to their ability to reach new markets, new audiences. "The latest technology to reach out to new audiences" - we're talking about a business Facebook page, right? Not exactly. Now how long has it been since you've looked at your phone system? It may be hard to believe it, but a modern small business phone system can really help bring new customers in the door. What are we talking about? Let's take a look.

The kind of features that a small business phone system provides, can depend in considerable degree on what the phone service provider actually supports. These aren't just hardware features, often. When you set out to look for how you might bring these features in to work for your business, you need to start with your phone service provider.

To start with, consider the auto attendant feature that phone systems have these days. Not only can a feature like this help by cutting down on the amount of time that customers end up having to wait when they call, you can make calls within the office much more time efficient too. An auto attendant feature, otherwise known as a phone tree, can offer people who call the company, a range of choices for where they need to be directed. It helps save money, because the system reads out all the possible extension choices there are and it doesn't need an actual person manning the phone.

When customers and other people call a business, there may not always be someone there who has the time at the moment to take their call. As such, the ability to place callers on hold or to transfer them to another extension, tends to be very important. They call this "call management", and it really simplifies things to have this feature.

Business calls are rarely just ever between two people anymore. There are usually multiple people who wish to share a single call. A conference calling phone system should be considered absolutely essential to a small business phone system, especially at times like this when to not have to access to this feature would brand a business as out of touch.

Of course in this day and age, you might expect that any phone would have the popular caller ID and speakerphone features; but these cannot be taken for granted and a small business phone system somehow. Lower end phone systems often try to cut corners by taking out the display of the speakerphone. These are important simply for the reason that caller ID tends to help employees place a call better, and a speakerphone system can be very convenient in a conference.

Things To Consider Before Buying A Small Business Phone System

If you are upgrading your small business phone system or starting out from scratch, you want to make sure that you get it right. Going with a system that someone else has recommended, for example, may not always be the right business telephone solution for you. This is because each business is unique and what may suit one may not be right for another.

What Do You Want Out Of A Phone System?

While it may be tempting to buy the cheapest phone system you find, it may not necessarily be the most suitable. When considering your small business phone system, do not just think about what you need right now, but also what you may need in the future if your business expands.

For example, if you buy the smallest office telephone system and then find in six months' time that you need a larger system, you may have to replace the whole thing as the existing one was not scalable. At least check to find out if the system may be upgraded in the future for relatively low cost.

Reliability

Sometimes in life, you do only get what you pay for and if you choose the cheapest telephone system first, without investigating all your options, it may give you nothing but problems. If you rely on your office telephone system, as the majority of businesses do, and your system is forever breaking down or needs maintenance continually thereby putting it out of service, you may end up losing money for maintenance and repair costs. There can be a knock on cost as customers who cannot contact you may look elsewhere.

What Features Do You Need?

Do you need one that can connect to intercoms? This is an ideal choice for small business settings as it allows you to connect within the office only. How about an answering machine or an address book or a caller ID? These features are usually integrated in most phone systems sold in the market but you can still find one or two functions missing. You should pick those with features you will find useful.

Check Out Your Other Options

If you want to cut back on cost, you should go for VoIP phone systems or Voice over Internet Protocol. This cost significantly lesser than a regular telephone call. In addition to that, it has clearer signal provided that you have a fast and reliable internet connection. If you want to take advantage of the features of this type of communication, choose a phone that is compatible with your internet connection and your router. You do not even have to change your old telephone number or system. Just as the right people about this.

Multi Line Or Single Line

Naturally you would go for a multi line system so you will not miss any calls. However, you also have to keep in mind that a multi line system becomes weaker in transmission signal. But you can find a lot of competent business phones sold in the market with this line system. You just have to dig deeper as to what they have to offer.

Do Your Research

Check out the reviews but do not be ultimately influenced by them. Just make them your winning guide. Since this system is a wireless one and some people install them on their own, there might be a few glitches in their installation. The bad reviews could be caused by a bad product or a bad installation procedure. It would be best to look at the bigger picture.

The Choices Of Systems

When considering buying a small business phone system you first have to decide what type of system you require for your business. Typically, you may choose:

- ✓ VOIP;
- ✓ PBX;
- ✓ Key Telephone System (KTS);
- ✓ Single number line.

You may have used a VOIP system or "Voice Over Internet Protocol" on your computer to talk to friends or family using your microphone and a messenger programme. However, with the VOIP system, you may call anyone from wherever you are in the world, or customers may call you on the number you are given when signing up, providing you have access to the Internet. Systems range from the very basic to the highly technical!

The PBX system is typically aimed at the larger company, and is known as "private branch exchanges". You have lots of lines and users have to dial an outside line first in order to get an external telephone line.

The KTS small business phone system may be suitable for a small office. This system can be one of the easiest to install, but if your company expands in the future you may have to upgrade to a different system due to the expansion of this particular telephone system being limited.

When you look around you may find that the choices for the small business phone system are numerous, so it really does pay to do your homework beforehand. Office phone systems are not the cheapest of things and just as with any other product there may be price differences. Alternatively, why not speak to the experts? They will discuss the most suitable options for your business telephone systems needs in an easy to understand way, taking in to consideration your current and future needs, as well as your budget.

Key Features Your Small Business Phone System Should Include:

Not all phone systems are suitable for all businesses. The perfect phone system for you will depend on the size and nature of your business as well as how you operate. If you run a small business, there are certain telephone system features that can really help to boost efficiency and support growth. Small businesses face particular challenges, such as finding ways to compete with larger companies, but with fewer resources. In this book, we give our top five or more essential must have features for a small business phone for small businesses.

Call Forwarding

Call forwarding allows inbound calls to be diverted to another phone, whether this is your home phone, mobile phone or a co-worker's phone. Some call forwarding features allow calls to be forwarded to a group of phone numbers, which will ring simultaneously until the call is answered, or to a final phone number where the caller can leave a voicemail. This is really handy for small businesses that a) have to stretch the workload between fewer employees and b) can't afford to miss potentially important business calls.

Voicemail

Voicemail is a pretty basic feature that comes with virtually all phone systems, these days. However, there are certain advanced features that are worth looking out for:

Remote access: Voicemail systems with a remote access feature are really handy for small businesses, as they tend to have longer periods of time when there is no one in the office. The remote access feature will ensure that you can access your messages whenever and wherever you may be, whether you are working from home or out visiting clients.

Extended voicemail length: When you have tight restrictions on voicemail length, callers often end up being cut off before they have finished what they want to say. This can be frustrating for callers and may prevent potential customers from calling back in the future.

Multiple greetings: It's good to have the capacity to have several different pre-recorded voicemail greetings so that the most relevant one can be played at any given time. You may wish to have a different message to be played when you are on the other line, when it is outside of office opening hours and during holiday periods, for example. This gives a professional impression of your company and saves you the time and hassle of having to change your message every time the circumstances change.

Music On Hold / Advertising On Hold

Studies have shown that the majority of people will hang up if they hear silence whilst being placed on hold. A significant proportion of these people will never call back. It is, therefore, worth giving your callers something to listen to whilst on hold, to increase the chances of them staying on the line. After all, you never know when the next important sales call is going to come through. You could either opt for on-hold music, on-hold messages or a combination of both. Ideally, you would not want to put your callers on hold but the reality is that sometimes this is inevitable.

A good way to utilise the time that callers are waiting on hold is by using on-hold advertising. This is a form of on-hold messaging that is used to advertise your products, services or special offers to those waiting on the line. You might also want to provide company details, such as normal opening times and where your office is located or, perhaps, to direct callers to your website.

Caller ID

Some small businesses simply don't have the time to answer all calls. If inbound calls do not account for a significant proportion of the sales you make, you may find that most of your time spent on the phone is unproductive. It could be that you receive numerous calls from companies trying to sell you their products and services, instead of showing interest in yours. That's why Caller ID is such an important feature for small businesses. It ensures that you always know when an important call is coming through, so you can make sure these calls are answered.

Live Call Listening And Recording

So your small business is growing and you're onboarding new sales reps. Well done! But as your team size increases, the need will soar for ensuring that everyone's on the same page.

What we mean by that is more than just providing all of your team members with special training. We also mean that you can make sure they actually handle the calls in the right manner to win over new customers and bring bigger deals. With a little help from your cloud telephony tool you can listen, live and without interrupting them, as your agents speak to leads and customers. All good? Great! Better still, if you hear that any of your reps can't cut it, you get a chance to follow up.

As all calls are recorded and stored in the cloud, you can also listen to them at a later stage. In this way, no detail gets lost. You can further evaluate how you can enhance the quality of each conversation or use real-life samples in your future team training sessions.

Automated Attendant

An automated attendant feature is a must have, these days, if you want to present a professional image of your company. An automated attendant will direct the caller to the appropriate extension via touch-tone or voice response options. One of the great things about automated attendant is that it does the job of the receptionist for you, allowing small businesses to cut down on staffing costs. You can also customise your messages to provide callers with useful information such as your business address, directions to your office and further contact details.

Convenience And Savings Of The Cloud

When starting a new business, you don't want to spend anything more than what's really essential. The rise ofcloud-based software means you no longer need to invest in infrastructure to host your solution. You also no longer need IT folks to make sure it works around the clock.

Gone are the worries about technical setup, maintenance or upgrades, because they are now all handled by the tool provider.The cloud offers your growing business the opportunity to easily change the plan details, as in this software model you usually pay a monthly fee on a per-user basis. Should anything go wrong, you can downgrade or cancel your subscription altogether without further ado.

Plus, storing and accessing all your data in the cloud means that you can work from anywhere in the world, so you're no longer handcuffed to your office desk. Your team can work remotely, which also lowers your operational costs.

Phone Numbers From Anywhere In The World

Many sales people can relate to the practice of appearing local when making contact with potential customers. This helps to build the trust necessary for your calls to be answered. A survey by Software Advice confirms that people are nearly four times more likely to answer calls from unknown numbers if those calls originate from a local area code.

Some cloud telephony solutions let you pick phone numbers from regions different than the one in which your business is actually located. As a result, you can call your international leads and appear on their caller ID as a number from their countries.

Conference Call

Teleconference features have been available for a while, so you probably know them well. If not, then, here it is in a nutshell. By conference call we mean the opportunity to add more participants to your conversation, so you can discuss business matters together.

There are several situations in which a conference call option can speed up your sales processes, improve your lead qualification and help you resolve problems in a more efficient way. Make sure your small business phone system includes this option, since you never know when it may really be useful, such as adding the decision maker to a call with a mid level executive.

Call Queuing And Automatic Call Distribution

These features work hand in hand with systems that will answer and place multiple callers in a queue. When a caller calls and there are already several people ahead of him and no one representative free to answer a call, they can included in a queue, instead of being turned away with a busy signal. The automatic call distributor feature allows a caller in the queue to be placed with the next available representative. These are great features to have in a system because they allow a small business to better handle and route a caller to someone to help them in the shortest available time.

Small Business Phone System - Benefits

The phone solutions available through hosted PBX phone systems are revolutionizing the way in which small and medium size businesses support their human resources and serve their customers. A reliable communication system can substantially increase the business productivity.

The benefits of a small business phone system include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Low cost
- ✓ Physical independence
- ✓ Greater scalability
- ✓ High speed connectivity
- ✓ Disaster recovery capability
- ✓ Easy installation
- ✓ Less maintenance requirements

Hosted Pbx Small Business Phone Systems

Hosted PBX small business phone systems are powerful tools for growing your business. This seamless business communication technology takes your business to greater heights, and is fast becoming the choice for all size businesses that wish to create a big business image for themselves. Most SOHO business clients are interested in implementing hosted PBX small business phone systems as these come with a wide array of features to meet the various needs of your business.

In the information age, virtual telephone systems afford an easy and swift transmission of information. A hosted PBX is an interactive computerized system with state-of-the-art advanced technology that makes possible effective local as well as long distance communication on phone. Without any hardware or software installation, you can quickly and effectively employ a VoIP system for answering calls, forwarding calls, saving and relaying messages, recording greetings, routing phone calls and paging services. With a hosted PBX small business phone system, you get all the basic utility features such as:

- ✓ Inbound caller ID lookup
- ✓ Auto attendant
- ✓ Call waiting
- ✓ SMS voicemail notification
- ✓ Call forwarding
- ✓ Voice mail - multiple boxes
- ✓ Conferencing
- ✓ Voice mail to email
- ✓ Find me/follow me
- ✓ Transfer and hold functions

This Internet based phone system uses VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technology. Compared to traditional phones, the virtual system enables a broader array of features that serve to enhance customer satisfaction, improve productivity and deliver exceptional improvement in business. With this virtual PBX phone system, small businesses can function just like Fortune 500 companies.

This full-service virtual system with easy to use features can eliminate many of the problems including echo and dropped calls. Routing your calls over the Internet helps you to save money without multiplying your operating expenses. Above all, this system helps to free your business from geographical constraints. Owing to its rich features such as a variety of flexible service plans, high quality voice service with low monthly service fees and minimal start-up costs, a hosted PBX small business phone system is capable of making an everlasting impact.

Virtual Small Business Phone System

Installing a virtual small business phone system in your workplace is ideal for improving your business. These phone systems, functioning through a hosted server are also known as auto attendant, virtual receptionist or hosted PBX systems.

Improve Business Productivity

With all its advanced functionalities, a virtual small business phone system greatly helps people running small firms. The calls coming to your office will be automatically attended and handled in a professional manner. The callers will be welcomed by a professionally recorded greeting and the calls will be automatically diverted to the required extension numbers. This means that you will never lose a single customer due to unanswered calls.

Quality Features of a Virtual Small Business Phone System

A virtual small business phone system has a number of convenient features. The callers will get a variety of technical support including call transfer, after-hours emergency, fax to email service, voicemail, dial by name, dial by extension, automatic call distribution, virtual auto attendant and find-me/ follow-me services. The callers can get connected to the multiple extension phone lines of the users, through a single number. With these quality features, company owners can keep in touch with their employees as well as customers any time.

Benefits of Utilizing a Virtual Small Business Phone System

Since these phone systems are equipped with all the quality features of a modern PBX device, users enjoy many benefits:

- ✓ Create a large business image
- ✓ No need to install expensive equipment
- ✓ Ensure localized presence through local numbers
- ✓ Toll free numbers for countrywide presence
- ✓ 24/7 flawless service for all-time accessibility
- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Work from any location
- ✓ Receive business faxes through email

The virtual phone systems in small business firms are equipped to efficiently handle the calls with multiple call transferring system, at the same time.

These virtual IP phone systems are scalable to a large extent, and one need not worry about the expense required for additional phone lines and switching equipments. The service provider can upgrade the system according to the requirements as you grow your business. You need not purchase or maintain any equipment on your premises when implementing a hosted PBX telephone system. A small business phone system can be easily installed and all the hardware and software are maintained at the service provider's site itself.

A Small Business Phone System Puts Small Companies In The Big League

A small business phone system can help a small business to operate more efficiently as well as minimize communication costs. Unfortunately, most phone systems are given little consideration when a business is first starting out. Communication with business clients and customers is essential to any successful business and should be given careful consideration before the final decision is made.

There are many different options available to the business owner when looking at a small business telephone system. Most of the time, basic features are needed to conduct business on a day-to-day basis. Things such as call holding, call forwarding, music on hold, and voice mail are all basic features that most businesses use during the course of communicating with customers or clients. For this reason it is important that any system being considered has these options available.

Since communication is the core of any business, considerations must be made for how the business operates and which features would be considered most important. As an example, if the business is involved in the delivery of physical products then having a way to communicate with drivers and dispatch deliveries would be important. A small business phone system in this particular case would need to include features that allow the dispatcher to communicate with the drivers as well as sales personnel and other employees scheduling deliveries. This type of system might include a feature that allows extensions to be forwarded to cellular phones so that drivers can be reached simply by calling their extensions.

The above scenario is just one of many ways in which having a properly configured small business system can streamline productivity and save the company money. Larger businesses have enjoyed this advanced technology for some time and now many manufacturers are now making these features available to smaller businesses. Technology such as voice over IP and automatic call distribution are now being integrated into small business phone systems.

One benefit to small businesses is having an auto attendant to route calls. With this technology in place, there is no need to have someone answering the phone simply to transfer the call to another person. The phone system can route these calls based on the last name of the person they're trying to reach or entering the extension directly if they happen to know it. If the business does not have an operator, there are ways that the system can be set up to route calls should the caller press zero.

Voice over IP technology has become the norm in telecommunications solutions. This technology allows businesses large and small to leverage their existing network for the transmission of voice communication. Phones for small business are now using this technology to allow them to have communication without boundaries. Like their larger counterparts, small businesses are taking advantage of the versatility that voice over IP provides. No longer limited to the office, employees can take their extensions with them so no matter where they're at, they can conduct business seamlessly. Another advantage to employee mobility is that customers and clients are given one phone number. Giving a client or customer a cell phone number often results in an employee always being available whether actually at work or not. By giving a client an extension on the phone system, they will only be able to reach the employee during normal business hours. The phone system provides a voice mail where the client or customer can leave a message. During times when the employee is at work, the extension can then be forwarded to the cell phone so that the employee can be reached if he or she is out of the office.

A large consideration when choosing a small business telephone system is one of supportability. Many smaller businesses do not have internal IT support. For this reason, when purchasing the phone system support should be included in the contract price. However, if the business does have internal IT support they will need to be trained on how to add extensions and provide other basic maintenance that the business needs on a day-to-day basis.

Toll fraud can cost a small business lots of money before they realize that it has occurred. Security is of the utmost importance when implementing a small business phone system. Toll fraud occurs when unauthorized calls are made using the phone system and the phone lines attached to it. These calls are often made to overseas locations at the expense of the business. They often don't realize it until they receive the bill and question the nature of the calls. Most of the time in these cases, the phone company will rarely reversed the charges. This is why it is important that the phone system be set up to minimize this risk. Additionally, a phone system should have the ability to block calls to specific parts of the world or to limit employees to making only local calls if needed.

The type of circuit used for phones for small companies is typically what is called a POTS line. POTS, an acronym for "plain old telephone system" is a single phone line identical to what you would see in a typical home setting. The limitation of the POTS line is that it can only handle one phone call at a time. In order for a business to receive more than one call at a time the phone company must bring in multiple POTS lines. They're then configured in the small business telephone system as a "trunk group". The phone system then distributes the calls to individual extensions. Due to limitations of standard phone lines, many small businesses are taking advantage of the newer technologies such as voice over IP. Since data circuits can be used for more than just voice traffic, it's become quite appealing to even the small business owner.

A business system is becoming a necessity for many small businesses. In order to compete with larger businesses, the smaller companies must appear bigger than they are. Since many consumers will often go with well-known names, smaller businesses are going to have to work harder to establish Customer confidence. When a customer calls and the call is answered in a professional manner, the customer is more confident about the potential transaction. Having a small business telephone system puts a smaller company on the same playing field as its larger competitors.

Conclusion

Advanced phone systems with automated call answering, and call messaging and routing features are also available for small business phone systems. These systems are economical in the long run since they avoid the necessity of employing dedicated phone answering staffs. The small business phone systems are easier to configure and install, and your company can save huge amounts on installation charges. The system will be highly helpful for clients to reach your customer care and vice versa, and can ultimately improve the professional image of your small business firm.

REAL Mobile offers a full featured SIP based PBX system that operated in the cloud allowing for no costly equipment at the customer site. Although PBX is traditionally for large companies the REAL Mobile system is priced economically for small companies, even a sole proprietor enabling even the smallest to compete with the largest.

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