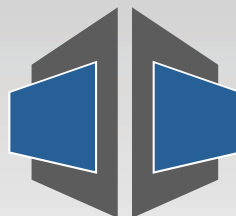


Phone System Buying Disasters to Avoid

C-Level Executives Share 5 Important
Lessons Learned The Hard Way



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Introduction

You may be meticulous about conducting your due diligence before making a large purchase decision for your company, but unforeseen problems can arise once your team starts to actually use the product or service. The goal of this article is to help you avoid specific problems with a new phone system that may not be apparent until after you sign a contract.

The **Compare Business Products** editorial team recently interviewed two Silicon Valley executives who both complained of costly phone system purchase mistakes that were made at their companies. One executive is the **CTO** of a medium-size technology company with a large sales force and account management team. The other executive is the **CEO** of two-year old startup with a 24-representative call center.

Following is a summary of the important hard lessons they learned from their experiences, which they have been generous enough to share with new phone system buyers. We hope that you'll benefit from their experiences.

Hard Lesson #1:

Buying a system with proprietary hardware that is dependent on the service provider

CTO: "We decided to go with an on-site VoIP solution, but later learned that any changes we wanted to make were totally dependent on the service provider. For example, if we wanted to get new phones, we had to use their phones. We were extremely limited with what would work with their system. Overall, it would have been better if we'd purchased a system that was more flexible for changes and didn't tie us to that one vendor."

Hard Lesson #2:

Getting a system that is not fully compatible with Microsoft Outlook

CEO: "Our call center reps receive copies of their voice mails in their email inboxes. However, we realized that once they listened to the voice mails and filed or deleted them in their email inboxes, the messages were not deleted in their phone mailboxes. This made things very inefficient. If you can imagine this problem being compounded by 20-25 people receiving 5-15 voice mails every day, and having to process through them in two places, the wasted time adds up. A system that was more compatible with Outlook would have been preferable."

Hard Lesson #3:

Data transmission delays resulting in poor sound quality and performance

CTO: “While it’s important for your provider to have data centers in enough geographical areas to support your business and ensure data is transmitted quickly; geographical proximity is not the only issue. The route the data takes can have a profound impact on performance and sound quality.

Using SIP trunks can be very cost-effective – one-tenth of the cost of using a traditional T1 line. However, the speed of transmission from the SIP peers is essential – and that may or may not have anything to do with geographical distance.

Your sales rep should be able to tell you what the vendor’s SIP trunk peer IP is. If they can’t tell you, ask them to have someone more technical get this information for you. Then, I recommend using Matt’s Trace Route (MTR), which is freeware that will trace the data route and give you feedback that shows packet loss and trip time. Anything slower than 75 milliseconds is going to be iffy. Over 100 milliseconds? Forget it. In a nutshell, you want to know how quickly data is going to be transmitted, especially in light of the other demands on your Internet connection, such as email, Internet usage, etc.”

Hard Lesson #4:

Slow customer support response times from the vendor

CEO: “We ensured that our vendor’s customer support hours were compatible with our work schedule in case we ran into issues. What we did not anticipate was their slow response times and poor quality service. Long hold times, unhelpful phone menu options, and inexperienced customer service representatives made their ‘available hours’ a moot point. You want to know the level of support they provide, when they’ll be available and how quickly they’ll reply.”

Hard Lesson #5:

Not having a back up telephone land line

CEO: “As a start-up, we are cost conscious, hence the decision to use a hosted VoIP solution for our phones. We did not have a land line in our office. However, when we had an Internet outage, we couldn’t make any calls except with cell phones. But what happens if there’s a power outage and batteries run out? With a phone system that is wholly dependent on the Internet, it’s good to have back up landline.”

Common Sense Advice From Lessons Learned The Hard Way . . .

When researching phone systems for your organization, it pays to be prepared before you talk with vendor sales representatives. Asking the right key questions and presenting them with detailed “what if” scenarios will help you make the best decision for your organization. sound quality.