

9 Things to Consider

Before Choosing a Cloud Phone Provider



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DIAL 9 BEFORE BUYING A CLOUD PHONE SYSTEM

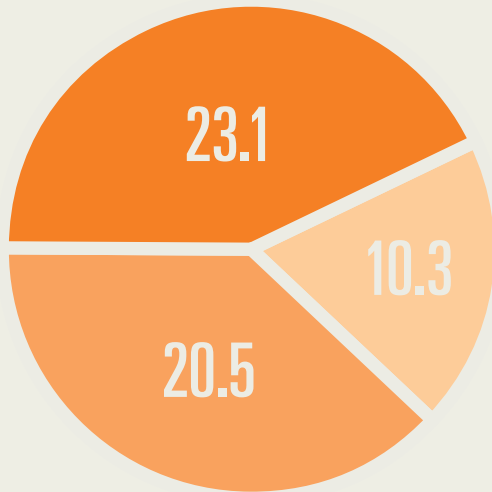
Businesses today are turning to cloud phone systems more than ever, but how do you know which one is right for you? First thing's first, there are two types of cloud phone systems to consider: basic hosted VoIP and premium managed VoIP. To choose the one that's best for your business, we've dialed it down to nine simple questions you should ask before pressing one for yes.

-  Is your business growing or scaling back?
-  Is your business phone-dependent?
-  Does your business have multiple locations?
-  Do you need advanced features?
-  Do you have the time and resources to manage a phone system?
-  Do you need your phone system to generate revenue?
-  Are your people on-the-go?
-  Does your business thrive on the latest technology?
-  How will you know if you've chosen the right VoIP provider?

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1. IS YOUR BUSINESS GROWING OR SCALING BACK?

Companies in growth mode are better off choosing a managed VoIP service provider that is able to keep up with ongoing changes in technology without interrupting service or requiring constant software downloads and updates. A company that's scaling back may be able to cut costs by using a basic hosted VoIP provider, but will need to set a budget to cover the expense of ongoing support.



TOP REASONS EXPERIENCED BUYERS GIVE FOR SELECTING A VENDOR

- 'cost of the solution' (23.1%),
- 'reputation of the vendor' (20.5%)
- and 'level of customization offered by vendor' (10.3%)

(Source: Focus Research's Enterprise Telephone Systems Buyer Survey, March 2009)

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2. IS YOUR BUSINESS PHONE-DEPENDENT?

Basic hosted VoIP service providers are okay for companies that don't rely on their phones for revenue generation, but if your company requires employees to be in constant communication with clients and prospects, a managed cloud phone service is a wiser choice, given the higher call quality, security and reliability.

Who relies on their phone systems to generate revenue and support customers?

INDUSTRIES

FINANCIAL SERVICES
STAFFING AND RECRUITING
BUSINESS SERVICES
LEGAL SERVICES
REAL ESTATE
NOT FOR PROFIT
MEDICAL & RETAIL

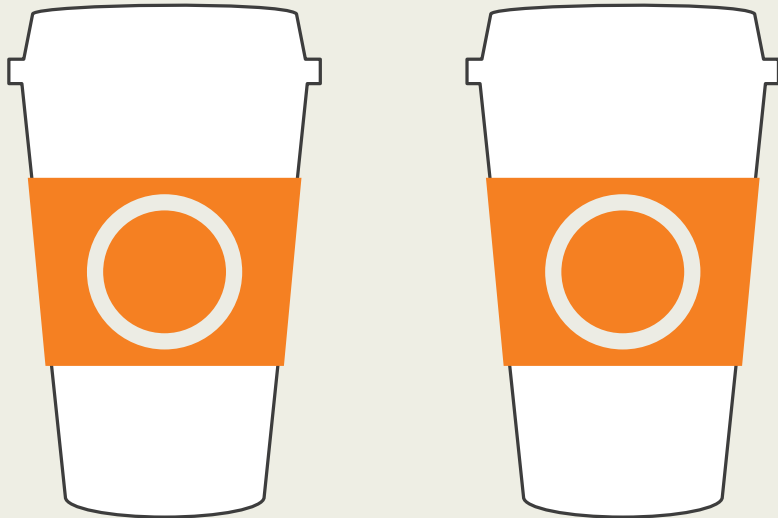
BUSINESS UNITS

SALES
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
CUSTOMER SERVICE
ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT
PUBLIC RELATIONS

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3. DOES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE MULTIPLE LOCATIONS?

Whether your offices are scattered across one city or 50 countries, multi-site management, scalability, and mobility support for employees on-the-go are a few of the features critical to the success of companies with multiple locations. Advanced features, like these, are found only in managed cloud phone providers.



FUN FACT

Starbucks has added an average of two stores on a daily basis since 1987

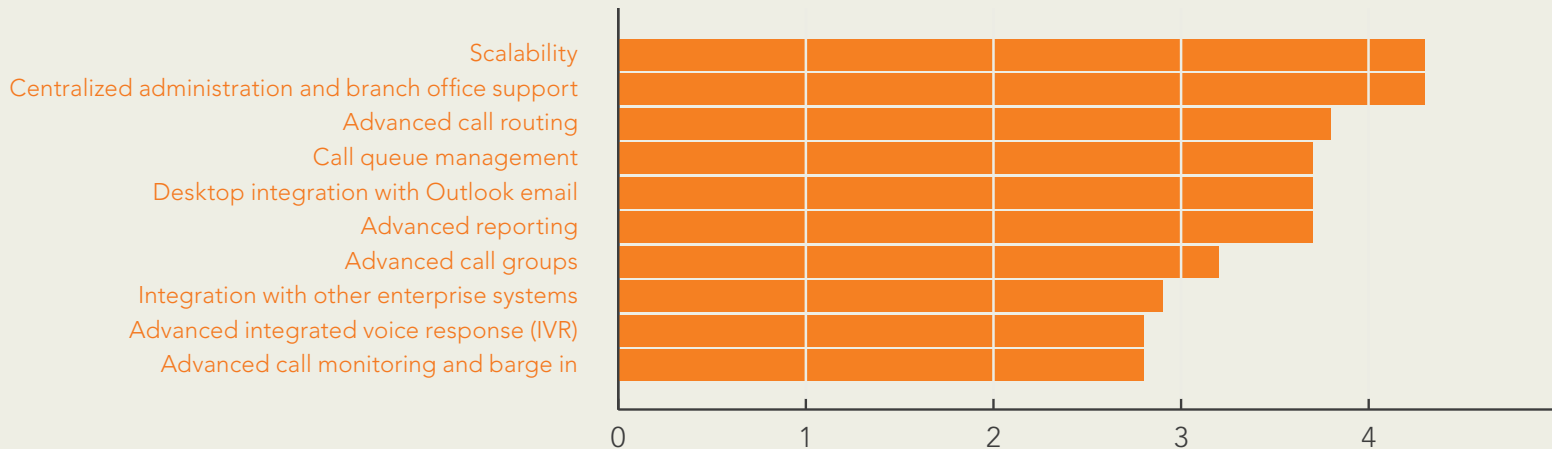
(Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/15-facts-about-starbucks-that-will-blow-your-mind-2011-3?op=1>)

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4. DO YOU NEED ADVANCED FEATURES?

All VoIP phone providers offer basic call management features, such as caller ID, voicemail, and conferencing, but only managed VoIP providers deliver advanced features, like contact center call queuing, interactive voice response, computer technology integration, multimedia recording, and mobile phone management – to name a few. If your business needs more than the basics, a managed VoIP is for you.

BUYERS RATE MOST IMPORTANT ADVANCED FEATURES TO CONSIDER



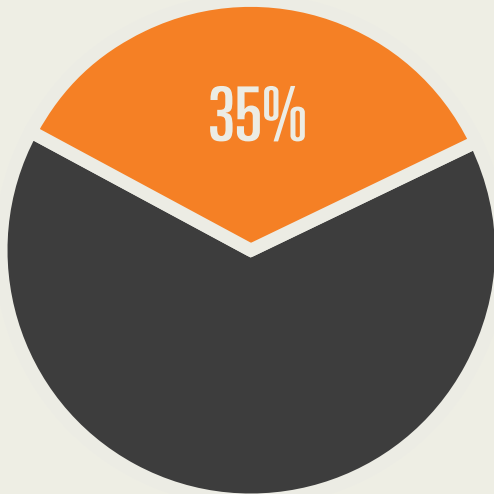
Our buyers rated advanced telephonic features on a scale of 1–5 with 5 being the most important.

(Source: Focus Research's Enterprise Telephone Systems Buyer Survey, March 2009)

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5. DO YOU HAVE THE TIME AND RESOURCES TO MANAGE A PHONE SYSTEM?

A basic VoIP provider requires your employees to set up the phones, update the software and troubleshoot issues, so if you're leaning toward basic, make sure you have the time and IT staff to dedicate to it. Managed VoIP providers deliver expert installation, ongoing support and automatic software upgrades. Plus, they enable you to add new licenses and services without limit.



On average IT departments spent more than a third (35%) of their time fixing problems with existing IT hardware and software...

<http://www.techradar.com/us/news/world-of-tech/roundup/it-departments-spend-a-third-of-their-time-fire-fighting-problems-1109662>

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6. DO YOU NEED YOUR PHONE SYSTEM TO GENERATE REVENUE?

If it's important that your phone system pull its weight, managed VoIP services are equipped to give you a few strategic advantages that a basic system can't. For example, a managed VoIP can be configured to integrate with your CRM, ERP, ATS and other apps. It can also cull information that will help you optimize staff levels, evaluate employee performance, analyze your marketing spend and better understand customer behavior.

40%

Small and midsize businesses reported seamless prospect data sharing between finance and sales, and finance and marketing

41%

Of SMBs reported seamless sharing between finance and marketing, and finance and customer services

43%

Of SMBs reported seamless sharing of customer data between finance and sales

60%

Still report struggles on their journey to seamless data sharing

The biggest IT challenge faced by SMBs lies in data quality and data integration.

(Source: <http://www.eweek.com/it-management/small-businesses-adopting-crm-struggling-with-data-integration/>)

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7. ARE YOUR PEOPLE ON-THE-GO?

Basic VoIP is great for static offices, but if your people are on the go, built-in mobile management from a managed VoIP service provider is the way to go. Managed VoIP systems enable you to transfer a call from wherever you are (home, airport, Starbucks) using whatever phone you choose, be it a desk phone, computer, or mobile.



20 to 30 million people work from home at least once a week.

(Source: <http://www.teleworkresearchnetwork.com/telecommuting-statistics>)

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8. DOES YOUR BUSINESS THRIVE ON THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY?

The wonderful thing about cloud based technology is that you have access to the latest solutions. How quickly you are able to access the latest and greatest depends on whether you choose basic or managed VoIP. As stated before, basic VoIP requires a do-it-yourself approach to hardware and software upgrades. Managed VoIP automatically takes care of the hardware and software upgrades for you.



**RULE OF THUMB IS THAT BUSINESSES
REPLACE A LEGACY PHONE SYSTEM ONLY
ABOUT ONCE EVERY SEVEN YEARS.**

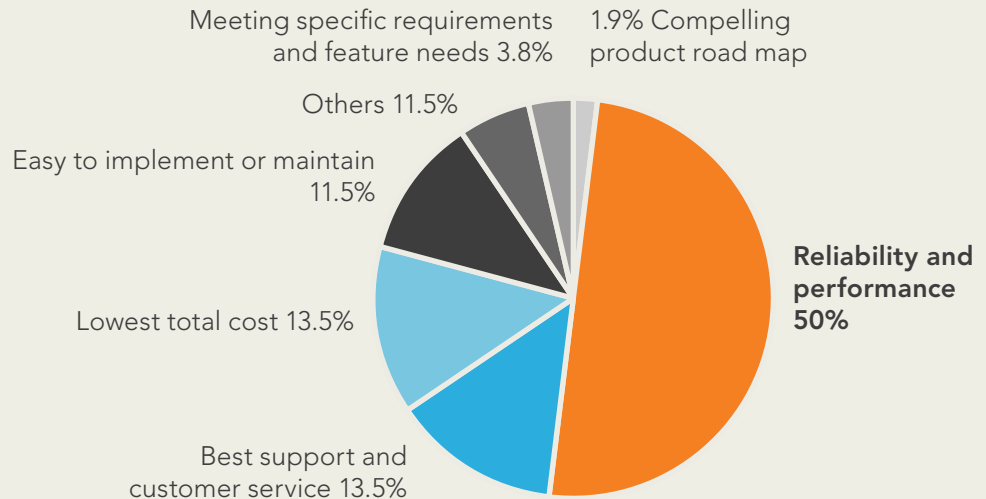
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9. HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF YOU'VE CHOSEN THE RIGHT VOIP PROVIDER?

Businesses searching for a VoIP phone provider that supports the way they work should use technology, service and vision to benchmark potential providers. Be sure to ask each VoIP vendor you consider what kind of technology they use, and how they intend to service your system when issues arise or upgrades are needed. Lastly, consider the reputation of the VoIP provider; do they stay current or have they fallen behind? Are they visionary or reactionary?

MOST INFLUENTIAL CRITERIA WHEN PURCHASING A PHONE SYSTEM

(Source: Focus Research's Enterprise Phone Systems Buyer Survey, March 2009)



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WE HOPE “DIAL NINE” HAS SAVED YOU TIME

in determining which type of VoIP provider is best for your business. To learn more about ShoreTel Sky and download other related eBooks, white papers, and view product demos please visit <http://www.shoretelsky.com/resources>.

REACTIONARY OR



VISIONARY

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