

Simplified Communications for Very Small Businesses

As a small business owner and entrepreneur, you want the ability to handle business—regardless of your location or time of day. Given resource constraints, you are likely acting as the sales expert, financial guru and IT manager all at the same time. Yet, in order to compete, you have to be responsive. How do you juggle all of your responsibilities effectively and remain available to your customers? You can start by looking at your communication system needs.



What Capabilities Do You Need?

The best place to start in assessing a phone system is to consider how your workers will be serving your customers. Will they be on the road, working from home or the office? Will all of your employees be working in the same fashion or will their job responsibilities require a unique communications approach? Do you anticipate growing your business in the next year or two? The answers to these questions will help you determine how to move forward in choosing and investing in a practical phone system.

Customer service goes deeper than simply picking up the phone. Your phone system should provide you more than dial tone and voicemail to maximize your ability to serve your customers.

With small business communications systems offered today, you can provide the flexibility to adapt your work environment to the way your customers are asking and often demanding you to serve them.

The right communication system can help provide:

- **Faster staff responsiveness:** keep employees connected, whether they are away from their desks, traveling to a client or at home with a sick child.
- **Improved customer service:** being available anytime, anywhere to them shows your customers they are your top priority.
- **Cost reduction:** you can lower your monthly calling costs by up to 50% using new IP-based voice services, and if your business has multiple

locations you can reduce or eliminate calling costs between those sites.

- **Mobility and home office capability:** hire the most qualified candidates, regardless of their location. As a bonus, hiring teleworkers may help you save money on office space.

What is Unified Communications?

Think about the way you communicate with your customers today: by phone—your office phone, mobile phone, even home phone; fax in some cases; through texting and e-mail. You may, for example, have a smartphone, a laptop, a desktop computer, a desk phone

and yet all of these technologies may not interface with each other.

As we expand the ways in which we communicate, we've also increased the complexity of communications. All these devices provide us with more ways to communicate, but do they make it easier and faster for your customers to reach you? Not necessarily—more devices mean added complexity and the possibility that customers can become frustrated trying to reach you.

That's where Unified Communications, or UC for short, can help.

What if you had a solution that allowed you to get your email and voice mail messages,

phone calls and faxes on the device that makes the most sense for where you are at a particular time? What if you could give your customers just one phone number, so that no matter where you were you received their call? What if you could get your email messages read to you over the phone when you don't have access to your laptop (such as when you are driving in your car)? That's what Unified Communications provides.

UC not only simplifies your communications, it makes you and your employees more productive. It provides a more streamlined way for customers, vendors and colleagues to stay in touch and it can increase the speed with which you communicate. Phone tag can be virtually eliminated and business



“The aspirations of a small business are always to grow bigger, not smaller.”

- Anthony Bartolo, General Manager of Small and Medium Enterprise Communications at Avaya

can accelerate. Decisions can be made more quickly when you get the information you need right now.

UC is a technology that isn't just for large businesses. In fact, it enables smaller businesses to compete more favorably against larger competitors. You can respond more quickly to customers, make it easier for them to do business with you, simplify your communications and even reduce costs.

Benefits:

As the business owner, better customer service, lowering costs and gaining efficiencies and productivity are at the top of your 'to do' list. With an IP telecommunications system, you can realize those benefits:

- **Better customer service** – Distinguish yourself from your competition by leveraging your accessibility and responsiveness. Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend your business to others and word of mouth advertising is important to your success.
- **Lower costs** – Select the technology that best suits your business. Pay for only the options you need.
- **Gain efficiency** – You and your employees can be directly accessible to your customers at all times. Reduce business travel time and reclaim your productivity. You also gain the efficiency of focusing on your core operational competencies rather than technology. If you want to increase operational efficiency, focus on your customer and

automate your business processes, it's time to take a hard look at your existing phone system. It may be too large, too small or just right, but if your current phone system isn't giving you everything you need for today along with scalability for tomorrow, there are many reputable companies that provide sound, affordable IP telephony products and services.

The right system for your business will help you leverage your most valuable business asset—your employees—to meet the demands of your customers now and in the future.



CASE STUDY:

Angel Dental Care (ADC) Catonsville, MD

CHALLENGE:

Replace existing phone system with a solution that would connect its two locations and help save on telecommunications-related costs. Look toward future growth and the possibility of adding new offices in coming years, allowing cost effective ways to network new locations.

SOLUTION:

- IP telephony
- Digital & wireless telephones
- Digital voicemail and phone managers

VALUE:

- Simplicity – the system is user-friendly and meets the practice's needs.
- Flexibility – ADC doctors can work effectively from home to review their schedules; contact patients through the office phone system; review patient charts and x-rays; and fax prescriptions to pharmacies.

RESULTS:

- Reduced telecom costs – staff can call between offices without incurring local toll charges.
- Increased efficiency – 3-digit dialing between the two offices.
- Increased quality of patient care – their calls are answered as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- ADC is prepared for future growth.

Summing it Up

Your business faces challenges every day. Implementing the right communications strategy is something that most small businesses overlook. Determine your communication needs; then look into the choices you have and their affordability. Unified communications may be the right answer for your business; it can help you “wow” your customers, retain your best employees, reduce costs and increase your efficiency.



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