

Moving an existing phone system to new premises?

- Establishing a new office?
- Expanding an office?
- Upgrading a telephone system?

When should we upgrade?

The one constant in business is change. Most organisations are expanding, shrinking or changing the way they work with new technology.

You're either going forwards or going backwards. How soon you take advantage of new communications software and hardware is an important strategic choice. Some businesses prefer to stay up-to-date, others prefer to squeeze every last penny out of their investment.

While it makes sense to avoid the bleeding edge of technology, falling behind the technology race can be just as harmful.

If you only invest in ICT when it's absolutely necessary and purchase new computers only when they break, you will experience more hardware failure and problems with old or unsupported software. Staff will not be using the same versions and most will need more training when they eventually have to catch up to the new applications.

Labour is a far greater cost than any ICT investment – so you need to consider the costs of lost productivity as your staff struggle with a disparate range of outdated systems.

Another reason to stay up to date is more about culture and employee satisfaction than efficiency. Ambitious management and staff want to work with the best tools in a modern work environment. Today's tech-hungry "Gen Y" workers expect it. And older workers will take on new technology more readily if it is deployed consistently.

So upgrading your communications can be justified in the interests of improving staff recruitment and retention alone.

As a rule of thumb, we advise clients to have a plan in place and catch-up to the latest technology at least every 5 years.

Get your timing and scope right

Obviously you won't be deploying a major ICT project in the middle of your December rush.

But often organisations that choose a quiet time can fall into the trap of biting off more than anyone can chew.

Many organisations time their upgrades to co-incide with a major office move. The thinking goes like this: "We have to move, so let's upgrade too." Sounds logical? Sadly, it can be a recipe for stress, if not disaster.

Moves, changes and upgrades can impact on all areas of business. Most businesses use a move as an opportunity to improve their workplace and often consider upgrades to IT or Communications systems.

To minimise the potential loss of productivity, sales, or customer satisfaction, careful planning is essential.

Keeping a business ticking away, while at the same time packing up gear and moving to a new home, can be a difficult and stressful task. If you add new software versions and operating systems, it can become overwhelmingly stressful for staff.

Our Communications Upgrade checklist offers advice on making your transition planning more successful...

Get Fit! (For purpose)

IT or Telephone system purchase or upgrade can be a considerable investment. Staff will need to spend time learning the new system so it makes sense to choose carefully.

You need to consider a range of factors:

- Reliability, robustness, durability, up-time – essentially you need your phone system to work 99.99% of the time. Anything less will be an embarrassing failure.
- How intuitive is the interface?
- How good is your vendor training?
- Overall upfront cost – the leading brands are often the most expensive, and will usually do the best job. But there are usually some key differences that can assist in your decision.
- How open is the system? Will it work with your legacy systems? Will you be locked in to a vendor or a re-seller?
- How professional and reliable is your system integrator?
- What is the future roadmap? What's in the pipeline? How well do future upgrades fit with your investment?

- What will future maintenance and future software upgrades cost?
- What is the cost of ongoing support? Some systems on the market are very attractive initially, but can cost a lot in ongoing support and maintenance.

Before you start looking...

Before you sit down with your friendly ICT vendor, analyse your needs and put some detail down on paper. This will help focus your search for features and add detail to your proposal brief to vendors.

Consider your need for Reliability

Are your incoming calls about high \$ value sales, such as new car sales; or are they mission-critical such as incoming patient calls to a medical centre?

In both cases you need a system that is highly reliable. You may need a maintenance contract to guarantee a quick response to any problem – such as a lightning strike.

If you do have mission-critical telephone calls, you could promote a separate number for these calls and give this number a priority in your call group.

Identify your user roles

Classify your user types into categories so that you can estimate quantities for handset and headset types, key system configuration and user training.

For example, your main receptionist staff may need expanded handsets to show all the lines being used.

Or you may provide a Desktop solution such as the Siemens OpenScope UC Application which allows users to place, receive, route, log and record telephone calls from their PC desktop.

Match user training requirements

At Evotec, we know how important it is to train users in new technology to get the best from your new telephone system. We design our training to focus on the individual user's needs.

Write down your communications plan

Most businesses have rules for how phone calls are to be answered – how to announce calls – how they are to be routed etc. It's a good idea to have these rules formalised on paper so that new functions and features can be applied to your existing rules and culture. Often, new functionality in new technology makes old rules obsolete or requires new rules to manage them. For example – if your new system has presence management, which staff will need permission to see the presence status of senior management?

Role-based communications functionality

There is no point in buying a system for complex features that your users will never use. On the other hand, taking advantage of useful new features and integrating them with your business culture and providing good training can deliver major improvements to your organisation's productivity. Apply features that will help people be more productive and work through the challenges

Do a user audit/survey

Show key users what the new systems can do – there are plenty of youtube videos to choose from. From your demonstrations, ask them what they want in their new phone system. Ask them what features they use most in their current system.

Evotec can assist you with a template for your user needs survey and/or we can provide consultancy services to manage this for you.

User Needs Analysis

When you have a handle on what your users need now and the new features they like, draw up a matrix of must-have features you need and features you will deploy.

For example, many businesses have moved to work more 'on-line', with more staff working to support e-commerce transactions and customer engagement, so while you will need fewer inbound lines, you may need to upgrade your customer service call centre software to ensure any customer enquiries are handled promptly and efficiently. First-time call resolution is the obvious goal because positive and negative feedback can be rapidly distributed via social media.

How many lines and extensions do you need?

Our stock advice is to estimate a 50% ratio of lines to staff. For example, if you have 10 staff, you may need 5 lines.

However, if your business is likely to grow rapidly – you may opt for more lines to cope with the growth.

If a large number of your staff rarely use a phone, you may decide to reduce this number.

Every organisation is different and your current ratio is probably a good starting point.

IP vs Digital Lines

Is now the time to make the change to VoIP? Any business that has more than one site should be looking at moving to VoIP now | 2

While VoIP has always been attractive, initial set-up costs of IP handsets and network improvements have stalled many businesses, large and small, from taking up the long-term cost-saving benefits of IP telephony.

Carriers are busy improving their offerings in this area. For example, Telstra has recently made some improvements to speed up roll-out of its Telstra Internet Protocol Telephony (TIPT) offering.

Video Conferencing

Any move or change is a good time to look at getting into Video Conferencing, especially for multi-site organisations that need to improve internal communications.

Again, VC sets up a range of issues and challenges, which you should at least plan for, even if you don't take it on during the move. For example, you may need improved networking and cabling and you may like to consider wiring meeting rooms for VC now. We can recommend affordable systems that will give you a quality alternative to staff meeting travel and improve internal communications across your branches and sites.

Voicemail

Today, voicemail is integrated into Unified Communications so that users can playback their voicemail from anywhere.

Faxes

Stand-alone fax machines are almost unnecessary with the new Fax to Voicemail technology. However, you will need to consider the new capabilities of multiple routing of faxes.

Messaging and Music On Hold

With more powerful Interactive Voice Response (IVR) your organisation has many more options to assist customers with professionally-recorded messages guiding your customers to various options.

While Auto attendant has reduced the importance of Music On Hold, it is still important to get your message right with a good combination of script, music and voice tone. And professional MOH helps you to avoid breaching music copyright laws.

Computer telephony integration with Outlook and CRM

With the proliferation of CRM systems and call centres, staff productivity can be improved by installing Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) software. Standard CTI interfaces include TAPI (Telephony Application Programming Interface - which links Windows computers to phone systems), TSAPI (Telephony Server Application Programming Interface, CSTA (Computer-Supported Telecommunications Applications) to provide screen pops, call blocking, power dialling, IVR collected digits and other productivity enhancements.

EFTPOS and other gateways

Will you need a fixed line for EFTPOS? Or can it transitioned seamlessly to ensure no loss of business.

Auto Attendant

Now that individual users can set their own Auto Attendant messages, you may choose to set up new scripts and rules to ensure your staff create messages that meet your message standards and match your brand and culture.

Unified Communications

We are all continually bombarded by messages - missed calls messages, voicemails, e-mails, faxes, SMS, Instant Messages and now Social Media (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn). Where do we get the time to do any real work?

The answer is to deliver Unified Communications, which is both a technical solution and change in business culture, requiring the latest communications technology. With the right set-up and expert user training, your staff will be empowered by UC to enhance their productivity.

For example, OpenScape Business UC makes it easy for staff to set their presence status so everyone can use the most efficient communications format. The result is fewer missed calls, more first-time call resolution, more productive staff and happier customers. There are many more features and benefits to UC and like most new technology, it requires good planning to introduce successfully.

User training

In any organisation you will find different levels of ICT technology skills. While young people often have no problem with new technology, some of your senior managers may need additional assistance to learn to get the most from your new phone system.

Service and Maintenance

Consider carefully the effect of a communications failure on your business. If telecommunications is crucial to your business, invest in a maintenance support contract with your vendor.

Purchase/Finance options

As with any business upgrade, your focus will be to achieve optimal functionality and ease of maintenance with lowest total cost of ownership.

You can purchase your system outright or lease or finance the system as a capital expenditure item.

As a Telstra dealer, we can arrange for your Alcatel or Siemens phone system to be financed through your telephone bill.

While this is good for cash flow and tax, the cost of telephone calls is trending downwards, so we advise caution before committing to anything longer than a 3-year contract.

For more advice on your ICT requirements, please contact an Evotec's IT Consultant in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane on 1300 133 996.