

Buyer's Guide for Small and Medium Businesses

Identify your business needs.

Small and Medium businesses have many factors to consider when selecting a communications solution. These factors include features, maintenance costs, service costs, warranties, and future expansion. This guide will enable you to assess your business requirements and ultimately invest in a solution that best suits your needs.

It is beneficial to start the selection process with an open mind. It is likely that you will be exploring new, unfamiliar technologies that may seem too complicated or too expensive to implement. Research all potential solutions thoroughly, even those that may not seem to be a likely match for your needs. Remember that increased productivity and reduced operating costs will allow your investment to pay for itself very quickly.

First, Define your Needs

The logical starting point is to define your minimum requirements for a communications system. This gives you a place to begin when evaluating potential solutions. For example:

How many employees will require phones?

This helps determine the approximate number of telephone lines the communications system will need to provide, allowing you to begin your



search for an appropriately sized solution. For example, a medical clinic would not need the horsepower of a communications system designed to support a large hospital.



Does your business place frequent long distance calls?

Technology is constantly evolving and creating newer, more efficient methods of communications. For example, implementing a converged voice and data system allows you to send voice calls over your data network, saving on toll charges, as opposing to placing those calls on traditional phone lines.

Do you need to allocate lines to fax machines, computers, or other devices?

Determining the number of lines needed for peripheral business equipment will also help narrow your search for the most appropriate solution.

Who will be using the phones?

For example, you may need an attendant console for a receptionist to control heavier, repetitive call volume from a central location. In addition, you may choose to install cost effective analogue phones in low traffic areas. Employees that require mobility will need cordless or wireless phones to stay in touch.

Does your business receive a high volume of calls?

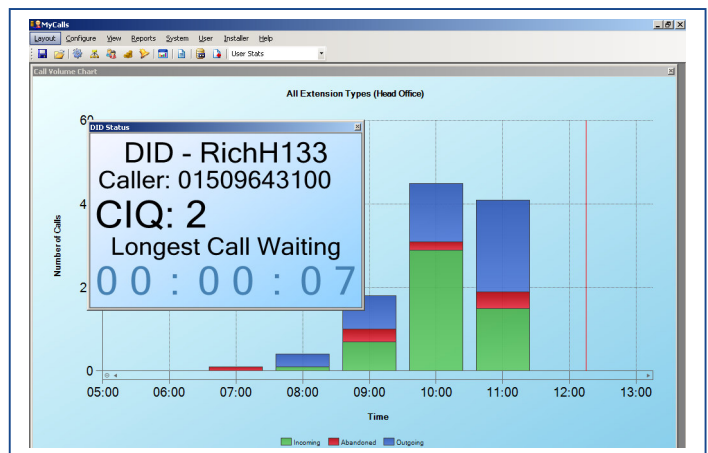
Busy signals and unanswered lines create dissatisfied customers and lost business. You may require a call centre application to process calls more quickly and efficiently.

Do you currently rent monthly voice conferencing services?

A communications system configured with a built in conference bridge provides better return on your investment than continuing to pay indefinitely for monthly rental of services.

Does your business have multiple branches that each requires comparable communication needs?

You should invest in a solution that enables distribution of resources from a primary location a primary location across a network to your branch locations. This capability minimises the investment in duplicate communications hardware, and the costs associated with maintaining multiple systems.



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