



The Complete Guide to Changing Your Phone System Provider



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Introduction

When you're trying to balance all the needs of your business, the last thing you want to worry about is whether your phone system is working optimally.

Making business calls may seem like the most mundane thing in the world, but there's a lot that can go wrong – from hardware issues to frequent call drops to security breaches. All of these can affect your team's ability to do their jobs and could even compromise your business' future.

Putting in a little work and research now can save you and your team time, money, and a ton of headaches in the long run. Aircall has

helped thousands of IT and other professionals navigate this important transition, and this guide will break down exactly what you have to do to figure out your ideal new phone system and get it in place as quickly and efficiently as possible.



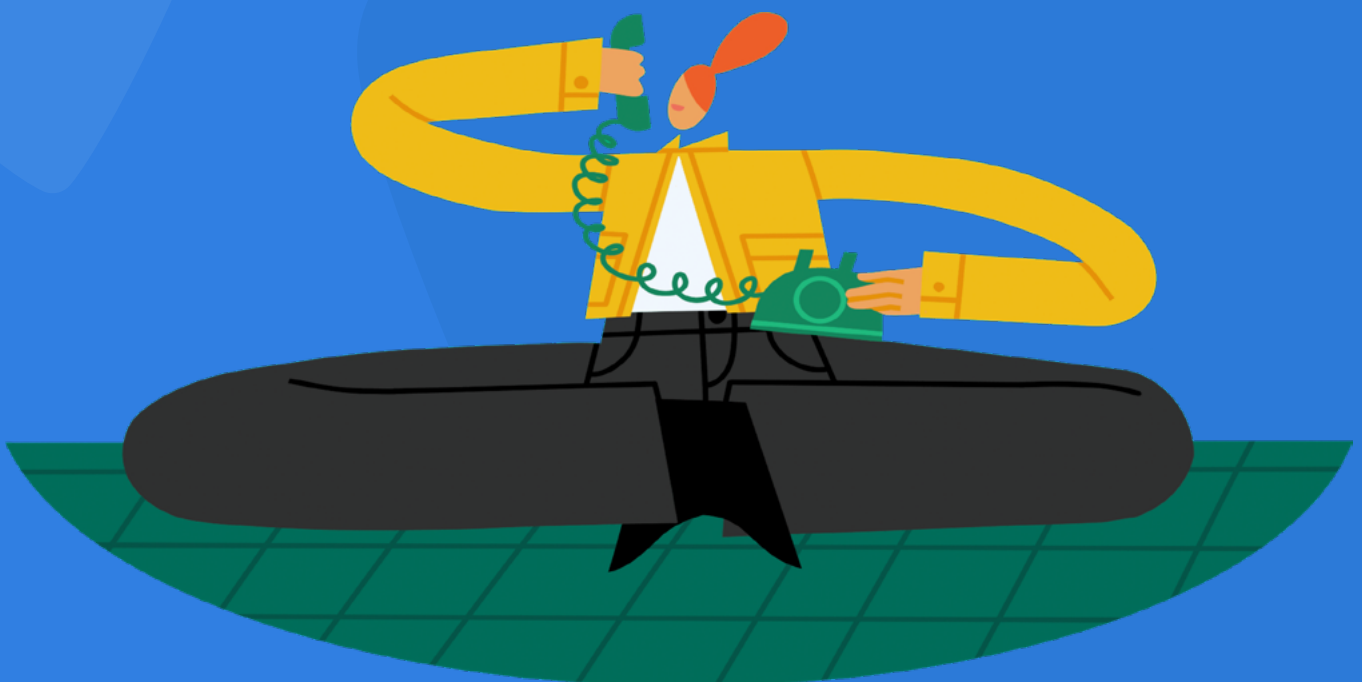
Identify What Your Current Phone System Lacks

Where is your current phone system coming up short? Are you having ongoing call quality issues? Is troubleshooting difficult? Is the system lacking in features and available integrations? Are you just trying to streamline every aspect of your business, including your voice service?

Identifying what your team finds frustrating about your current phone system can help

you set your priorities to ensure your new solution ticks all the right boxes.

To get the ideas flowing, here are the main answers we've heard over the years when asking clients why they first started looking for a new voice solution.



Reliability

Clear communication, both internal and external, is part of the foundation of every successful company. If call quality isn't stable, your business operations could come to a screeching halt.

But there's a tradeoff to be made when it comes to call quality. Landlines have historically provided the most consistently high-quality phone experience. But they lack most of the productivity-boosting features, cutting-edge integrations, and customization opportunities of software-based solutions.

If you decide you want the flexibility, efficiency, and potential to create bespoke customer and prospect experiences that come with VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) and the best call quality, you'll want to take a few additional precautions – the most important of which is investing in a strong WiFi connection.

Additionally, you should check whether your provider is doing all they can to keep your lines active. Are they able to automatically switch carriers in case of outages? Do they use top-of-the-line codecs that prevent dropped calls even when one or both parties are having internet issues?

VoIP software reliability has increased dramatically in recent years, but you'll still want to conduct due diligence.

“Clear communication, both internal and external, is part of the foundation of every successful company.”



Quality

If a phone system isn't high-quality – and that means quality of sound, quality of connection, and quality of technical foundation – then it isn't worth your time. When evaluating a VoIP solution, here are some key signs to look out for that indicate that the provider is focused on quality:

Audio codecs

Your VoIP provider should utilize state-of-the-art codecs to ensure that your calls are sharp, clear, and don't drop – even if the person you're calling has a low-quality connection. G.711, G.729, SILK, and Opus are common VoIP codecs, but Opus is often considered best in class due to its flexibility, wide range, and excellent sound quality.

Uptime

The closer your VoIP provider is to 100% uptime, the better. It should have multiple failsafes in place that prevent it from losing connectivity, blacking out, and significant losses in call quality.

Quality of service (QoS)

Your VoIP provider should have processes in place to prevent IP packet drops and delays, monitor network performance, and manage call speed, quality, and traffic. Better yet if the provider has a dedicated specialist to on-board your business onto their system.



Simplicity

If it takes new team members a week to master your phone system, that's usually a sign that it's time to start the search for a more user-friendly solution.

When it comes to your phone system, the following should be quick and easy:

- Adding and removing callers as needed
- Installing the app on any device
- Altering settings, such as business hours, call routing rules, and voicemail greetings

If day-to-day maintenance and customizing the system to fit your business' needs is a time-suck, it's likely not the right solution for you.

Flexibility

Remote work is becoming more and more popular with each passing year: In 2019, **41% of businesses** globally permitted employees to work remotely. And it's for good reason – an analysis by **FlexJobs** found that people who work remotely are more productive, less stressed, and take fewer sick days.

These days, it just doesn't make sense to have your team chained to their desks in order to make and receive business calls. And that's essentially what happens when you use a traditional phone system.

Cloud-based phone systems, on the other hand, can function anywhere with internet service or strong data connectivity. That means your team can field calls from anywhere, which could help you close more deals and provide superior customer service by responding to a client need immediately.

“**Every extra bit of information you can gather about each of your clients will help you provide an excellent customer experience.**”

Integrations

Imagine a world where notes don't need to be manually copied between your phone system's transcription service and your client relationship management (CRM) software. Or if you could instantly see a caller's background and profile before even picking up the phone.

Modern VoIP phone systems can now **directly connect** to a variety of CRM, helpdesk, and administrative platforms to easily fit into your tech stack. Data from your phone system could be directed instantly into your Hubspot account, and you could make calls directly from the Zendesk and Salesforce apps. When these integrations are up and running, essential information like complete call recordings, notes, and category tags are automatically shared between tools, making your team's workflow seamless.

Every extra bit of information you can gather about each of your clients will help you provide an excellent customer experience. As an added bonus, integrations eliminate many manual tasks, which allows your team to direct more of its attention to client conversations themselves.

Analytics

Despite our ability to monitor and collect data on almost every aspect of our lives, a lot of support and sales teams are still flying blind on client calls. Critical insights, like call efficiency and hiring optimization, are left to gut instincts or overloaded spreadsheets.

Phone systems with **modern reporting features** can reveal precise statistics on call duration, missed-call rate, time-to-resolution, and wait time. You can further break down these stats by employee, team, or number.

Recording this data over time and tracking it by month or quarter can alert you to important business trends. And viewing it on a real-time dashboard can help you flag issues and make critical adjustments in the moment before isolated issues become full-blown crises. The more data your phone system collects and analyzes, the stronger your decisions will be.

Audit Your Business to Determine What's Possible

Now that you've established your deal-breakers for a new system, you should perform an audit of your business to figure out its limitations and what makes the most sense.

What does your infrastructure look like? Who are the decision-makers? How will you be using this new phone system?

These are just a few of the initial questions you should consider. Here are a few more that will lead you toward the phone system that's best for your business.



Logistical

Where Do You Do Business?

Make sure your new phone system can provide local numbers in locations where your company operates. First and foremost, local numbers create a sense of trust between customers and a brand. Second, local numbers eliminate per-minute charges for your customers (and additional expenses on your end, as well). Toll-free numbers are good for customer convenience, but will still cost your company extra.

How Big Is Your Team?

The right phone system for a 1,000+ employee insurance company will look different than one for an early stage startup. Examine your needs and compare them to a phone system's features and functionality. Some solutions will be better able to scale alongside a growing business, while others are set up to support large-scale operations, but are a bit more static.

How Active Are Your Phone Operations?

What does your business use the phone for, primarily? Outbound or inbound calls? Sales demos or support requests? Internal calls between team members or external calls to clients? Depending on your situation, you may want to check pricing-per-minute, call routing features, and analytics capabilities.

Network Architecture

VoIP systems require a strong, reliable internet connection. For the best user experience, you'll want to invest in a capable router and high-quality headsets. Furthermore, find out what any potential phone system's backup plan is in case of network outages. This is an answer you'll want to know before emergency strikes.

Political

How Much IT Time Will Be Necessary for Implementation?

If you've chosen to go the landline route, your provider may send someone to install the system, but periodic maintenance will be on your IT team.

With a cloud-based phone system, however, you can simply download the software and start inviting your team members to do the same. One of the beauties of VoIP is the simplicity and speed of installation and implementation – you won't have to take up precious IT time and resources in order to get it up and running.

Who Will Be Impacted?

Each department (sales, support, onboarding, HR, operations, legal, etc.) will likely require different features and configurations from your phone system. Consult various stakeholders from around the company before making a decision to ensure that you choose the right solution for as many people as possible.



Financial

What Are the Commercial Details of Your Current Relationship?

You'll need to find out the terms of your current phone contract, whether it be another VoIP system or an old-school desk phone system. If you're on a month-to-month payment system (or just winging it on Skype), go ahead and make the switch. However, annual contracts may require additional consideration.

What Are Your Ongoing Costs?

Consider the pricing of outbound vs. inbound calls. A cheaper per-minute phone provider (they do vary) could make switching a good financial decision in the short term. For example, if your company makes a high volume of outbound calls, the price-per-minute is a significant expense.

Also consider the maintenance costs of each option. If you choose a more traditional phone system, you'll have to pay both a high upfront cost for the hardware as well as any maintenance over time. VoIP systems, on the other hand, often charge a simple monthly subscription fee, making budgeting easier for your business.

Security

If you're a CTO or IT professional, you're likely hyper-aware of the security risks that come along with any software or service that connects to the internet. And though it's impossible to avoid that risk entirely, there are certain steps you can take to protect your business from harm.

First, we'll break down the most common types of security vulnerabilities, then examine the crucial security features you should look for while evaluating VoIP providers.

3 Types of Attacks That Threaten VoIP Security

There are many different types of attacks that bad actors can launch on a company's phone system. Call hijacking, call tampering, ID spoofs, phreaking, and a man-in-the-middle attacks are just a few. But the most common are denial of service (DoS) attacks, eavesdropping, and malware.

In a DoS attack, hackers utilize automatic dialers to hit your phone system with a deluge of calls to slow it down or even shutter it completely. Clients trying to call your business during this process won't be able to get through, and your team may not be able to make outgoing calls, either.

VoIP eavesdropping is a more sophisticated version of the childhood practice of holding a glass up to a door when there's a private conversation going on behind it. Cybercriminals

gain access to unencrypted phone lines in order to gather valuable private information, often for identity theft.

Malware, which includes viruses, worms, trojans, and bots, can be weaponized to steal private information, damage or destroy software programs, and read and exploit sensitive data. Employees often accidentally invite malware into their VoIP systems by clicking links from suspicious senders, failing to update their software, and using unsecured WiFi networks.

4 Security Features Your VoIP Provider Should Have

In addition to the steps you'll take internally to ensure your team members are keeping the phone system secure, you should look out for the following features in a VoIP provider:

- It adopts the standards of international security frameworks, such as ISO 27001/27002, SOC 2, and PCI/DSS
- It encrypts customer call data at the beginning and end of the call, as well as the call contents
- Altering settings, such as business hours, call routing rules, and voicemail greetings



Request a Test Drive

Once you've narrowed down your options to one potential phone system, you'll want to see for yourself whether it can meet your tech needs.

First, request a personalized demo. Generally, you'll be able to meet with an account executive, who will learn more about your company's specific needs and teach you how to get the maximum benefits out of their system.

Next, you can (and should) try out a new phone system yourself before committing. These practice runs usually last from one to three weeks or are defined by a set duration of call time.

During the trial period, you'll want to make sure your setup is as similar to everyday operations as possible. That means setting up your **call routes**, **IVR messages**, voicemail inboxes, and team structures if you can.

And even after the trial period ends, you may want to ease into your new phone system. Many companies choose to migrate a single team first as a "pilot" program. Once everything and everyone is up to speed, onboarding all other operations is a breeze.

Finally, ask about the full menu of pricing options. Month-to-month plans are less economical than annual subscriptions, but they could prevent buyer's remorse. Plus, you can always upgrade your plan to a long-term commitment once you're sure that it's the right fit.

“You can, and should, try out a new phone system yourself before committing.”

Make a Plan For Porting

When it comes to your business's phone system, your numbers are your most prized possessions. They're posted everywhere; they're how your customers know to reach you. Changing them could result in weeks of unnecessary headaches and lost opportunities.

Luckily, you can keep your numbers when you transition to a new provider. Porting is a process that involves four parties: you, your current provider, your new provider, and a network carrier. It isn't the most user-friendly process, but if you come prepared, you can make it as quick and painless as possible.

You'll have to complete some paperwork, but your new phone provider will do the majority of the heavy lifting.

All you need to provide is:

- The name of your current phone provider
- The name of each number's account owner
- A full address associated with each number
- A copy of the last bill for each number

If you can provide each number's **CSR** (customer service record), this document will contain most of the necessary information, which will expedite the process.

From there, your new provider will handle all interactions with your former solution. It will submit an LOA (letter of authorization) to your old system, and it will schedule porting requests with a carrier (e.g. Voxbone or Twilio). This ensures your numbers are officially active and accessible.

Please note: Porting requests with carriers must be scheduled at least eight days in advance. This time frame – plus collecting the necessary information – means you should plan on budgeting at least two weeks for the full transition.

Get It in Writing

Take precautions to make sure everything about your new phone system remains predictable. The best way to do this is to put all the details of your partnership in writing.

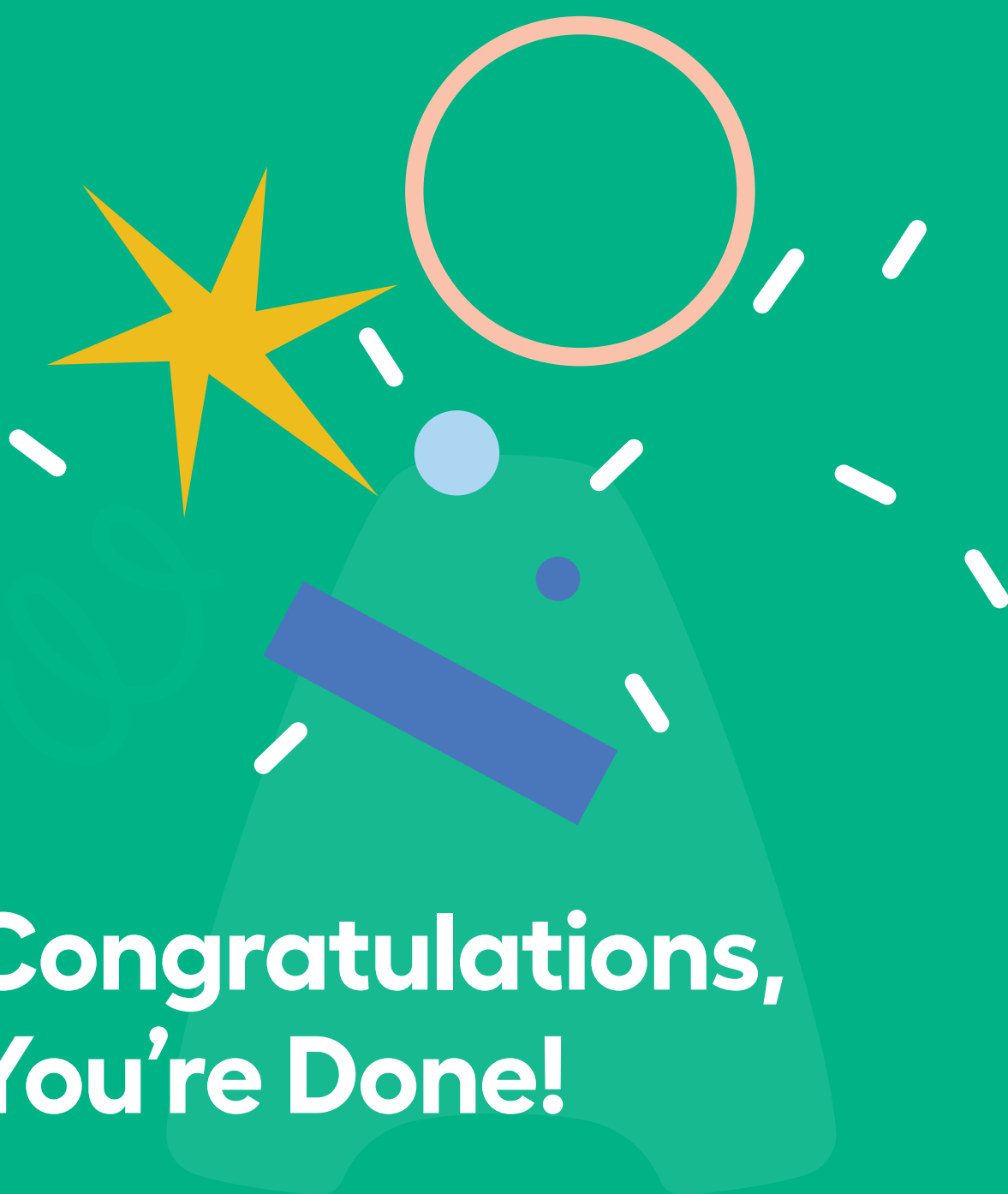
If you are expecting onboarding assistance, for example, confirm exactly how long this support will last. Is it negotiable? Are there different levels of support available?

Additionally, you'll want to inquire about an **SLA** (service level agreement). This document ensures the quality of your service will remain at an acceptable level throughout your relationship – and establishes consequences when it fails to meet expectations.

Finally, be sure to address industry-specific requirements. Is your new phone system compliant with GDPR? HIPAA? PCI? Those are answers you'll want before regulators ever ask a question.

“**Take precautions to make sure everything about your new phone system remains predictable.**





Congratulations, You're Done!

The time spent making this decision and putting it into practice has undoubtedly saved you and your team time, resources, and future headaches. Now that you can relax knowing that your phone system is efficient, secure, and set up for maximum productivity, you're free to focus on the work that really matters – pushing your company toward its goals.

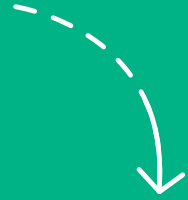


Let's Work Together

Aircall helps sales and support teams have the kind of conversations that create lifelong customers. Our phone system easily integrates with your CRM, helpdesk, and other critical business tools, giving employees all the insights they need to deliver exceptional experiences.

See for yourself

aircall.io



Incoming Call...

 Customer Support



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