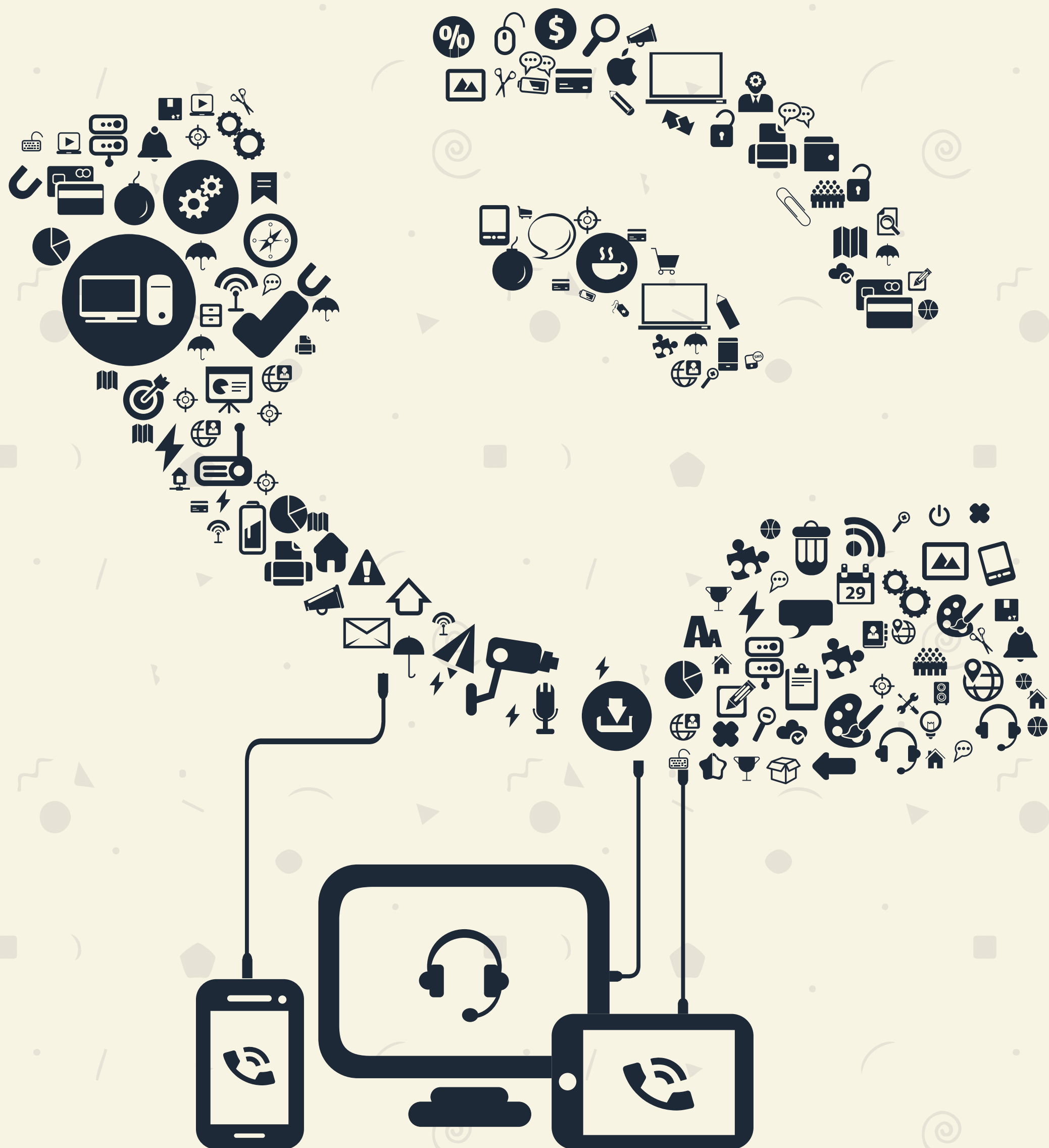


📞 **10** QUESTIONS TO ASK 📞

BEFORE YOU BUY **PHONE SERVICE**

FOR YOUR BUSINESS





TELEPHONE SERVICE

Telephone service continues to be a critical factor to business success. What are the components required for high quality business phone service? Of course, you want your phone to be dependable, the sound to be clear and the price to be reasonable. But what about advanced features like extra robust line limits or an automated attendant system? What's a must and what's just nice to have?

Moreover, there's always a risk that you'll sign with a company that over-promises and under-delivers. To make an informed decision and get a good deal, you'll need to understand a bit more about the phone service features that matter most to you and your business.

Here are ten questions you should ask yourself so you can understand all of the most important parameters that go into this decision.



WHAT TYPE OF **PHONE SERVICE IS
BEST FOR MY COMPANY?
TRADITIONAL TELEPHONE, VOIP, OTHER?**





1. WHAT TYPE OF PHONE SERVICE IS BEST FOR MY COMPANY? A TRADITIONAL LANDLINE, VOIP OR SOMETHING ELSE?

For many years, analog trunks, primary rate interface (PRI) and “plain old telephone service” (POTS) were the primary methods of service delivery. More recently, however, phone services that run on data networks are far more widespread. Leveraging data as a means to transmit telephone calls is simply economically smart, as it allows for greater efficiency – when voice line capabilities aren’t being used to capacity, they can be dynamically rededicated to data.

Using data lines to carry voice calls has another economic advantage, as it allows companies to source services from a far wider pool of providers, effectively circumventing the monopolies of local phone service utilities. Packet-switched, Ethernet-delivered network access, moreover, is even more economically sound, as there’s less dedicated hardware necessary.

Another advantage lies in the decentralized nature of the IP network, as compared to the traditional analog, PRI, or POTS lines that limited service locally. Today, VoIP service has some significant advantages, especially for remote teams. Of course, those who do not have sufficient IP network connectivity, or, for that matter, those whose service cannot handle voice traffic, do well to take the traditional route.



**WHAT SERVICE
PROVIDES US WITH THE
BEST AUDIO QUALITY**





2. WHAT SERVICE PROVIDES US WITH THE BEST AUDIO QUALITY?

This one depends on a few factors. Sound quality on phone calls is often influenced by available bandwidth – too much data will slow down a skinny circuit, causing packet loss and diminished sound quality. It depends on the equipment, too. Your handsets, routers, switches, and firewalls all must be in excellent working shape for proper data transmission to flow smoothly.

Sound quality is also largely dependent on the codec itself that is issued for voice transmission for audio quality, as the codec can lead audio quality to fluctuate. For example, the G.711 codec has ten times the sample rate of the G.729 codec, so it will deliver better quality but will also be more demanding on bandwidth. The transmission speed can make a huge difference for audibility, as it turns out. Note that VoIP service achieves its best quality when your carrier and your packet provider are one and the same. By working together, as it were, and staying in the same “walled garden,” businesses can preserve their VoIP sound quality.



WHAT ARE THE **LINE
LIMITS OR COST FOR
LARGER WORKFORCES**

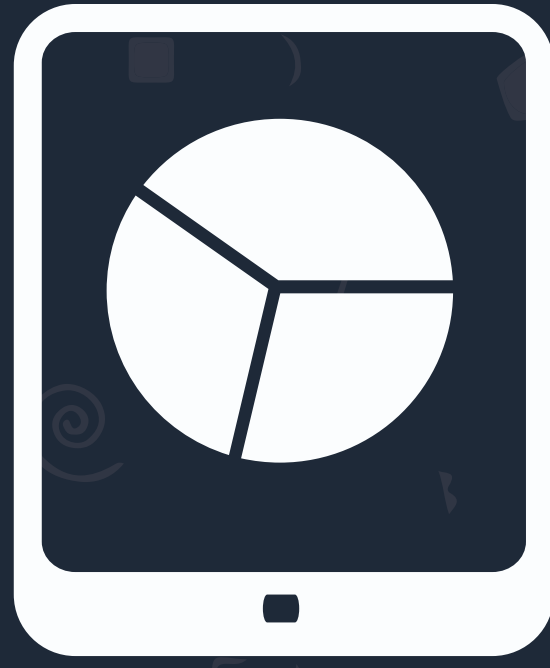




3. WHAT ARE THE LINE LIMITS OR COSTS FOR LARGER WORKFORCES?

The number of people using the phone at the same time can cause some fluctuation in speed and quality of the lines. This means that you can ignore the number of people who will need phones – it's the number of people who are using the lines at the same time that determines what level of service you need.

Furthermore, each party speaking on a conference call, for example, needs his or her own phone line for the service to work well. Naturally, audio quality may be affected by this kind of volume increase.



WHAT KIND OF TECHNOLOGY DO WE NEED FOR THE **PHONE SERVICE OPERATOR**





4. WHAT KIND OF TECHNOLOGY DO WE NEED FOR THE PHONE SERVICE OPERATOR?

At this point, many companies employ automated attendants with their phone service, directing callers to their preferred department or service. Some phone services come with apps that allow team members to manage automated attendant settings from their desktop computers or mobile devices.

Additional “smart” features are also becoming the norm, from instant messaging to presence detection, as well as web conferencing, for example.



HOW WILL VOIP IMPACT OUR **INTERNET SPEEDS?**





5.HOW WILL VOIP IMPACT OUR INTERNET SPEEDS?

Two major factors that affect bandwidth usage are the codec used for voice service and the number of concurrent phone calls. For example, the leading high-quality codec, G.711, requires 80 Kbps per phone call, whereas G.729, another extremely common codec, operates at a bit rate of just 8 Kbps per active call.

Therefore, which codec your VoIP solution uses, and how many phone calls are being made at the same time within your company, will have bearing on your internet speeds, which will fluctuate accordingly.



WHAT'S **THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN ILECS
AND CLECS?**





6. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ILECS AND CLECS?

Your “incumbent local exchange carrier” (ILEC) is your local phone company. The three ILECs that currently have regional mandates in the US are AT&T, Verizon and CenturyLink. These companies rely on the local infrastructure of copper telephone wire, and they’re regulated by the FCC as well as local public utility commissions.

A “competitive local exchange carrier” (CLEC) has the option of using its own fiber network infrastructure, which completely circumvents any dependence on cooperation with the big three, or of licensing shared use of local copper lines at regulated rates. With this flexibility, CLECs have been actively building their own fiber networks. They offer innovative services to their customers at competitive rates.



WHAT KIND OF **CONTRACT
SHOULD WE SIGN IF ANY**





7. WHAT KIND OF CONTRACT SHOULD WE SIGN, IF ANY?

In contrast to the static phone service provided via PRIs or POTS lines, where the very cost of the equipment led providers to require a contract duration commitments from their customers, SIP trunking turns “voice” into a network application, and extra capacity does not entail the same kind of additional infrastructure.

It’s a flexible system, and providers structure their service contracts for maximum versatility. If your business experiences spikes in phone or data activity during specific times of year – the holidays, for example – then this may be the way to go. Having the option of dynamic adjustments to your call volume capacity is definitely a key advantage to deploying SIP trunking solutions.



DO WE NEED A
TOLL-FREE NUMBER?





8. DO WE NEED A TOLL-FREE NUMBER?

The advantage of toll-free numbers is that your customers and prospects will be able to call you from anywhere in the country without incurring any long-distance charges. By removing any costs associated with reaching out to you, the very presence of a toll-free number diminishes friction points. The caller simply will not be billed for the call.

Note that in recent years, one can easily transfer a toll-free number from one phone service provider to another for at most a nominal fee. Also, be forewarned – when local callers dial your toll-free line, those calls will be included on your bill.



**IF/WHEN THE COMPANY
EXPANDS, WHAT WILL IT
COST TO EXPAND THE PHONE
SERVICE ACCORDINGLY?**

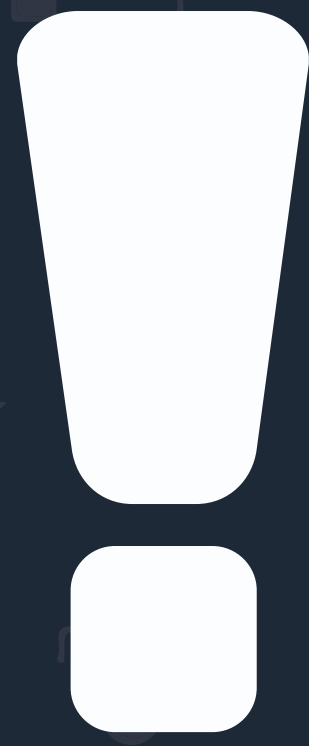




9. IF/WHEN THE COMPANY EXPANDS, WHAT WILL IT COST TO EXPAND THE PHONE SERVICE ACCORDINGLY?

Business growth is often rapid and unforeseen. You can plan all you like, but there's really no way to accurately predict when you'll need to ramp up on your phone lines.

One of the main advantages of the SIP trunking services is the ability to increase the modules in use without having to overhaul the hardware that powers the system. To expand your SIP trunking service, simply add users within the network, and you are good to go.



IF/WHEN WE MOVE OFFICES, **HOW
COMPLICATED WILL IT BE TO
TAKE OUR PHONE LINES WITH US?**





10. WHAT IF WE MOVE? WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS WILL WE HAVE MOVING OUR PHONE SYSTEMS?

When it comes to any type of technology, you always need a backup system, with the hopes that you'll never need to access it. An intermodal option, such as service delivered over copper or wireless, can provide you with the kind of redundancy you want, making sure you're covered in the event of unexpected circumstances. You can also make use of redundant fiber entry paths to your building if they are in place.



THE ANSWERS ARE UP TO YOU



THE ANSWERS ARE UP TO YOU

The number of features available in most business phone services these days is extensive. You're going to want to weigh the pros and cons of these many factors to determine which service, and which configuration at which size, is right for your business.

Make sure that you get the best service that accommodates the particular needs of your company. No matter which service you choose, though, make sure that you've got attentive, expert tech support, and that the bills are reasonable.

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