NETiMAGE
network solutions

FREE Business Advisory Guide:

The 7 Most Common And Costly Mistakes Companies Make When Choosing A New Business Phone System…
And How To Avoid Them

This exclusive insider's report will reveal:

- Nine critical questions you should ask any phone vendor before signing a contract.

- How to avoid getting talked into unnecessary bells and whistles and expensive maintenance contracts.

- How to avoid getting locked into a complicated system that you can't support or expand without significant upgrade costs.

- What features to demand in the basic package.

- Why it's so important to purchase an "open system".

- The single most important feature in a voice mail system; overlook this feature and you'll regret it forever.

This guide is provided as an educational resource by:

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The 7 Most Expensive Mistakes Companies Make When Choosing A New Phone System… And How To Avoid Them

No matter which way you look at it, buying a new phone system can be a significant investment for any business.

But it can be an *even more* expensive and frustrating process if you end up making many of the costly mistakes that trap buyers into:

- Paying too much for unnecessary bells and whistles and ongoing maintenance.

- Getting locked into a complicated system that you can't support in-house or expand without significant upgrade costs.

- Getting locked into an expensive and limiting maintenance contract.

- Not getting the features you need in the base package and subsequently having to pay a LOT more for 'upgrades' and add-on services that you "assumed" were included.

Worse yet, once you've spent the time and money to install a new system, you're pretty much stuck with it and the last thing you want is an overpriced, complicated system that requires a lot of outside maintenance.

How We Can Help You Avoid Making A Bad Decision On Your Next Phone System

Since 1996, NETiMAGE has been installing and maintaining VoIP phone systems for organizations with 5-250 users. Our experience with both voice and data technologies uniquely qualifies us as a candidate for your "short list" of VoIP phone system vendors. Many vendors selling phone systems have some experience with either voice or data, but not both. <u>More later on why that's critical to the success of your installation.</u>

We are also intimately familiar with most types of corporate phone systems, including everyone from the big vendors to the smaller, lesser-known systems. We specialize in helping companies make smart, cost-saving decisions when buying a new phone system.

Unfortunately, a lot of companies get fooled into buying an overpriced, complicated phone system because they didn't know all of the options available to them, or simply because they didn't know how to ask the right questions when interviewing phone vendors.

With so many choices, it can be very difficult to make an educated decision without spending days or weeks researching all the vendors and options you have. That's why we

created this report; we wanted to arm buyers with a quick reference to help them make the absolute best decision when buying a new phone system.

Buyer Mistake #1:
Not planning for future needs

Before you buy a system, make sure you have answers to the following questions to plan ahead for future needs:

- How many new employees do you think you will hire over the next few years?
- Will you have remote offices or employees working from home?
- Do you think you will open other locations?
- Do you need the ability to do call reporting /call accounting or other specific function that is "mission critical" to the way you work today?

Look for a system that will allow you to add new features and expand your system later on at virtually no additional cost. A good question to ask your vendor is, "If we decide to add these features later on, what will it cost us in total hardware, software, and services?"

Buyer Mistake #2:
Not buying an "open" system

A truly open system is one that will work with "standards-based" equipment you already own or plan to purchase later on including phone headsets or tabletop conferencing equipment. Otherwise, you'll be locked into buying that vendor's equipment only, forcing you to pay top-dollar. How do you know if the system you are buying is truly an open system? Make sure it:

- Works with a variety of different standards-based phones.
- Is capable of working with traditional telephone trunks as well as SIP trunks.
- Runs on an industry standard operating system (such as Windows or Linux).
- Can easily be maintained in-house (change extensions, add or delete users, change features).
- Can interface seamlessly with off-the-shelf software applications such as customer management and sales force automation without the need for complex programming.

Buyer Mistake #3:
Not getting enough voice mail

Don't underestimate the value of voice mail. The last thing you want a customer to hear is, "Sorry, you cannot leave a voice mail message because this user's box is full." To avoid this all together, make sure your system supports a large quantity of storage for voice mail. Also, your system should have the ability to set up an unlimited number of voice mailboxes.

Buyer Mistake #4:
Not understanding the difference between a hosted phone system and one that is premise-based

There are advantages for hosted and premise-based VoIP phone systems, so if you don't consider both options you might be missing out on a system that delivers features and options that you never knew existed.

Hosted solutions offer a maintenance-free design because the phone system is hosted at an off-site data center where engineers are handling the hardware and software upgrades "behind the scenes". Because there is little equipment to purchase, except for the phones themselves and some network equipment if necessary, the perception is that a hosted system is cheaper than one that is installed in the office. But this is often not the case. Regardless of cost, the idea of not "owning" the phone system (or being responsible for it), is attractive to many.

On-premise phone systems provide the convenience of optional self-administration and can be combined with the benefit of low-cost SIP trunks for those who prefers 100% control over their system. And, an on-premise system does not require a monthly payment to be made indefinitely. Unless you have a very small system, often times an on-premise system is more cost effective after a year or two.

Buyer Mistake #5:
Not requiring your vendor to provide both remote and onsite technical support

There are certain technical issues that a phone vendor cannot resolve without making a trip onsite where the phones and network equipment are physically located. If a vendor doesn't offer onsite support for their system, they will expect the customer to take part in the troubleshooting process and assist with the replacement of faulty equipment.

Fortunately, these days most issues can be resolved with remote technical support. If you use a phone vendor that doesn't provide remote support, you'll wait longer, possibly days longer, to have your issues addressed. A vendor who can provide remote support can access

your phone system through remote control software in just minutes. This allows them to make adjustments to the system as if they were right there in your office. Even phone system upgrades can be done remotely. Make sure the vendor provides remote support as one of their standard support options that you don't pay "extra" for.

If the phone vendor is able to provide only low cost, call center-level phone support, chances are you'll be dealing with low-level "tech" who is unfamiliar with your system and who will stick around long enough to help until the next shift change.

Buyer Mistake #6:
Buying a system that doesn't have "next generation" features already built-in

While you might not think you want or need next generation features that a VoIP system offers such as a web interface and e-mail integration, the system you buy should allow you to implement these features very inexpensively at any point in the future.

Look for a system that has built-in:

- Voicemail
- Messaging
- Automatic Call Distribution (ACD)
- Operator Console
- Call Forwarding
- Meet Me Conferencing
- Smartphone Integration
- SIP Trunk Capabilities

These built-in features will eliminate the need to purchase these applications separately down the road. If the system you are considering requires complex infrastructures, implementations, or pricing schemes to add these features on, look for another system.

Buyer Mistake #7:
Buying on price alone without making sure the vendor you are buying from is truly qualified

The old saying, "you get what you pay for" is true for a reason. To be clear, we're not suggesting you have to seek out the most expensive vendor to make sure your system is installed correctly and without problems – but we ARE suggesting you should seek out the most QUALIFIED vendor.

Money saved up front can quickly be lost in your time (and frustration) in getting the system to work, getting your vendor to keep their promises, and dealing with problems and system failures. After all, a down phone system (or one that doesn't work properly) can make you look bad to customers and prospects and end up costing you in lost business.

Because a VoIP phone system uses both voice and data technologies, finding a vendor with expertise in integrating these two technologies is CRITICAL. Unfortunately, many vendors selling VoIP systems struggle to understand data networks. Or, they might be a data network vendor who does not understand voice systems well enough to properly install or support one. Be sure you choose a vendor that's got the right combination of voice and data experience and is qualified to work with both technologies. (Most vendors are not!)

To find qualified vendors, do a little homework to make sure the vendor you are considering is capable of properly installing and supporting your new phone system. Ask potential vendors:

- How will a VoIP phone system affect the performance of my company's data network?
- How long have you been selling phone systems, in particular, VoIP systems?
- How many years have you been working with data networks?
- What is your relationship with the manufacturer of the phone system?
- Is support available in the evening and during weekends?
- Can upgrades and support be performed during "off hours", if necessary, so that your office is not disrupted?
- Do you have a guaranteed response time for emergency issues?
- What do you charge to provide technical support and do you offer an all-inclusive support and maintenance plan?

A good vendor will have a customer satisfaction policy and a close working relationship with the manufacturer they represent. They won't be afraid to show you a production system or let you view the configuration process. If the vendor doesn't have good answers to these questions, chances are they could leave you high and dry and they are not the type of company you want to work with.

Our commitment to customer satisfaction is based on this promise:

We will use our 26 years of experience to make recommendations that are guaranteed to be 100% appropriate for your organizations' size and budget. We won't suggest products and solutions that are too large or too small for your project. Too large and you'll never make use of the system capacity. Too small and you'll outgrow the system quickly, or worse, it may never be capable of meeting your needs to begin with.

If we can't offer you a solution that includes the features and functionality that will meet the needs of your business, we'll tell you upfront. We'd rather acknowledge that our solution may not be the best fit for you than to have you be unhappy with a new system.

We can make this commitment to you because we know what we are doing and have complete confidence in our ability to recommend the RIGHT system for you from the beginning. Just look at what some of our clients have said about us:

"NETiMAGE takes a team-oriented approach to all of our projects. They are committed to our success and will do whatever it takes to get the job done. NETiMAGE always looks out for our best interest!"
- Robert Dixon, IT Manager
Olympus Power

"I rely on the people of NETiMAGE completely for all of our networking needs. When we say we need something, they find a solution. Quite often, they have the solution for us before we know we need it!"
- Pam Lunny, Director of Corporate Accounting
Patterson Planning & Services, Inc.

"NETiMAGE is one of the most professional firms that I've ever worked with. My salesperson and the network engineers I work with are extremely responsive. They always go the extra mile for us!"
- Retta Smith, VP Administration
AirCapital Aviation Services LLC

Not Sure If You Are Ready To Upgrade Your Phone System? Our Cost-Benefit Analysis Will Help You Decide

If you are a business owner, IT Professional, or Office Manager who is thinking about upgrading your current phone system because it's outdated, you're moving your office or because you just want to see if you can save money on your phone bill, we'd like to offer you a Free Cost-Benefit Analysis consultation to demonstrate how we might be able to help you:

- Make a great first impression on prospects and impress your customer with features that make you sound professional and ensure that you never miss an important call.

- Reduce the cost of your existing phone lines thanks to new technology. If you're not using Internet-based phone lines, you're probably overpaying for your phone service.

- Gain full control of the system with built-in self-administration tools. Implement changes quickly and save money doing it yourself.

Since the mid-90's, NETiMAGE has been installing and upgrading software-based phone systems that offer sophisticated, yet practical features such as "follow me" call routing, remote voicemail management, and voicemail-to-email. Your system will be designed to enhance your company's image to customers and prospects, as well as to provide a rich set of end-user tools to make call management easier (and yes, even more fun!).

Here's How A Free Cost-Benefit Analysis Works:

At no charge, we will come to your office to review your current phone system, telephone bill, business practices and future needs.

Based on what we discover, we'll provide you with one or more options for helping you to save money and get the results you want. We'll be happy to discuss your options, clarify any grey areas, and answer any questions you have. We will also map out the costs and steps involved so you know exactly what to expect.

At the end of this analysis, you'll be in a much better position to make an informed, intelligent decision on whether or not you should upgrade your phone system, AND which option(s) will work best for you.

<u>You are under no obligation to do or buy anything</u>; this is simply our way of introducing our voice services to you and demonstrating how we can make all your phone system problems a thing of the past.

What To Do Now

To request your Free Cost-Benefit Analysis, do one of the following:

1. Call me direct at 203.242.1111 ext: 140
2. Send me an e-mail: cwheeler@netimage.net

Remember, there is no obligation for you to buy or do anything – this is simply a discovery meeting to see if a Voice over IP phone system is right for your business.

Looking forward to your response,

Chris Wheeler
Senior Client Manager
NETiMAGE