



The Ultimate Guide to Business Phone Systems:

How to Choose the
Best Business Phone System for you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE SECRET: It IS Possible to Find an Easy-to-Use Phone System With all the Features you Need	3
Finding the Best Phone System for Your Small and Growing Business	4
What do you Need From a Phone System?.	5
The Pros and Cons of Different Phone Systems	6
Virtual Phone Systems	7
Traditional Landline Systems	8
VoIP Phone Systems.	9
Cloud-Based Systems.	10
Choosing the Right Business Phone System for You.	11
Staffing Needs.	12
Essential Features.	12
Locations	12
Telecommunication Needs.	12
Conclusion: The Ideal Phone System Solution is Right Around the Corner	13

THE SECRET:



It IS Possible to Find an Easy-to-Use Phone System With all the Features you Need

Your business phone system: it's probably not something you spent much time thinking about until it starts failing you. As soon as you find yourself unable to handle multiple calls or access features you need, it becomes clear how important that phone system is.

Luckily, there are dozens of business phone system options out there; you just have to identify the one that's right for you and your company.

In this short ebook, we'll walk you through the various systems available, the benefits and drawbacks of each, and how to find the right hosted phone solution for your business this year.

Let's dive in.



Finding the best phone system for your small and growing business.

Business phone systems are advanced networks designed to boost communications for small and medium-sized organizations, as well as large corporations. Since phone systems handle everything from customer service calls to call routing, they have a variety of features that aren't typically found in residential phone systems.

Some of those features might include the following:

- **Multiple lines.** Allows your company to speak with many customers at once.
- **Voicemail.** Stores messages and makes retrieving them easy, even forwarding voicemail to email.
- **Automated features.** Such as auto-attendants that help callers reach the right people quickly, and 'hunt groups' that deliver calls to a group of phone numbers simultaneously, or in a specific order.
- **On-hold messages and music.** Lets callers know the line is still active.
- **Web-based administration.** Allows you to control and manage lines and numbers in an easy-to-use single tool.

Because business telephone systems need to be so diverse, there are also several different types of them available. These include multi-line, VoIP, PBX, and Cloud-based systems (VoIP and Hosted Voice).



What do you need from a phone system?

If you're shopping for an updated phone system, the first thing you should be asking is what you genuinely need from a phone system. While it's easy to get caught up in which phone system is "the best" or "the newest," neither of these considerations takes into account your company and its unique requirements.

With that in mind, here are three questions you should ask to find the technology that suits the needs of your company:

- **How extensive should the system be?** Does your business need a comprehensive phone system with individual telephones at employee desks? Or would you prefer a phone service that uses virtual technology and mobile devices, instead?
- **Do you need physical hardware?** If your workers need phones at their desks, what kind of service do you need? Could your company use VoIP systems, which run on the internet? Or would you prefer to use landline phone services offered by a regional provider?
- **Do you want to host the system or not?** If you choose VoIP, are you planning to house the system at your business, or have your provider host it? The latter means you should likely look into a hosted voice system.

In addition to the questions above, you should think about the features you need from a phone system. For example, do you need multiple lines? How many employees within your organization will require a phone? Are you installing a new phone system, replacing your existing system, or expanding your current phone system?

If you don't know the exact answer to some of these questions, don't worry. Most companies are in the same boat. Still, having some idea about your desired features and benefits will go a long way toward helping you get the phone system you need and want.



The Pros and Cons of Different Phone Systems



Virtual Phone Systems

Virtual phone systems allow people to call a company's primary phone number, which then routes the call to remote employees using their private home or mobile phones. Essentially, the virtual system masks their numbers and provides a single, professional line for the public, instead.

These systems work as an advanced solution for call-forwarding. Incoming calls hit the primary phone system and then transfer to an employee's personal phone. They also offer other features, such as call screening and forwarding, toll-free numbers, online faxing, and automated receptionists.

Pros: Virtual phone systems allow businesses with a scattered or remote workforce to maintain a professional appearance while also enjoying phone system features employees likely wouldn't be able to access using their landlines or mobile phones.

Cons: Even though clients call a business phone number, the calls are still processed via a mobile or home phone network. This means phone providers charge for the call or use home phone minutes during business calls.

Best for: Small businesses with remote workers, companies that need to keep private cell phone numbers private, solopreneurs.



Landline Systems

Most of us are familiar with the standard landline system. Landlines are conventional phone systems, most of which are supported by a local or regional phone company.

Landlines are also called PSTNs, or “public switched telephone networks.” They’re analog systems that use the telephone company’s existing wiring. If you want to use a landline service, you’ll need PBX (private branch exchange) hardware within your office. This hardware enables multiple extensions and provides a variety of system features, like call directories and transferring.

In recent years, landline systems have advanced. Today, some function as hybrids with VoIP systems. While landlines are simple and straightforward, they’re not powerful enough to meet the needs of many businesses. Additionally, tech solutions continue to outpace them - offering new and exciting options. As such, many system providers are phasing out landline systems.

Pros: Landlines are reliable and familiar, and most employees know how to use them without much adaptation or training.

Cons: Landline systems typically come with a high upfront purchase cost and often require service contracts with a telephone systems vendor. As landlines become defunct, it may be challenging to find and purchase a landline system for your business. Additionally, most landlines aren’t powerful enough to provide the various functions you’ll need for your business phone system.

Best for: Corporations with in-house IT departments, companies without access to high-speed internet.



VoIP Phone Systems

VoIP phone systems don't hook into the phone company's wiring system. Instead, they use a company's existing Internet connection. VoIP systems offer functions that were, at one time, only accessible to large corporations who had access to expensive PBX hardware.

These features include automated attendants, computer integration, and call queues - all of which make it possible for voicemails to be delivered to email inboxes and for computers to transform into softphones. VoIP systems make it possible for remote workers to access a business phone system with their mobile devices.

Pros: VoIP systems deliver all the features rapid-growth companies might need. These systems are simple to configure, install, use, and are cheaper and more accessible than landline systems.

Cons: VoIP systems require a reliable Internet connection. If you're in a place with cable or poor internet service, this system may not work for you.

Best for: Small businesses that want a powerful phone system at an affordable price.

Note: If you decide to invest in a VoIP system, you'll need to choose how you want it to be hosted. With VoIP systems, you can either buy your equipment and host the system yourself, or rent the equipment from a service provider and have that provider host it in the cloud.



Cloud-Based Systems

Cloud-based systems (VoIP and Hosted Voice) are some of the most popular for businesses today. With a cloud-hosted solution, the company utilizing the phone system doesn't have to worry about maintenance or hardware - outside of the phones themselves. Instead, the cloud system service provider houses, maintains, and upgrades all PBX technology on behalf of the company.

In addition to being easy to maintain, cloud-based systems allow growing companies to scale quickly. It's simple to add new lines and access new features as a company grows. For these services, businesses typically pay a monthly fee on a per-user basis.

Pros: The most significant benefit of cloud-based systems is that there's no hardware or dial-tone service to purchase, install, and maintain. Instead, the provider takes care of all of that for you. All you have to do is set up and configure the system for your business, right from your personal computer.

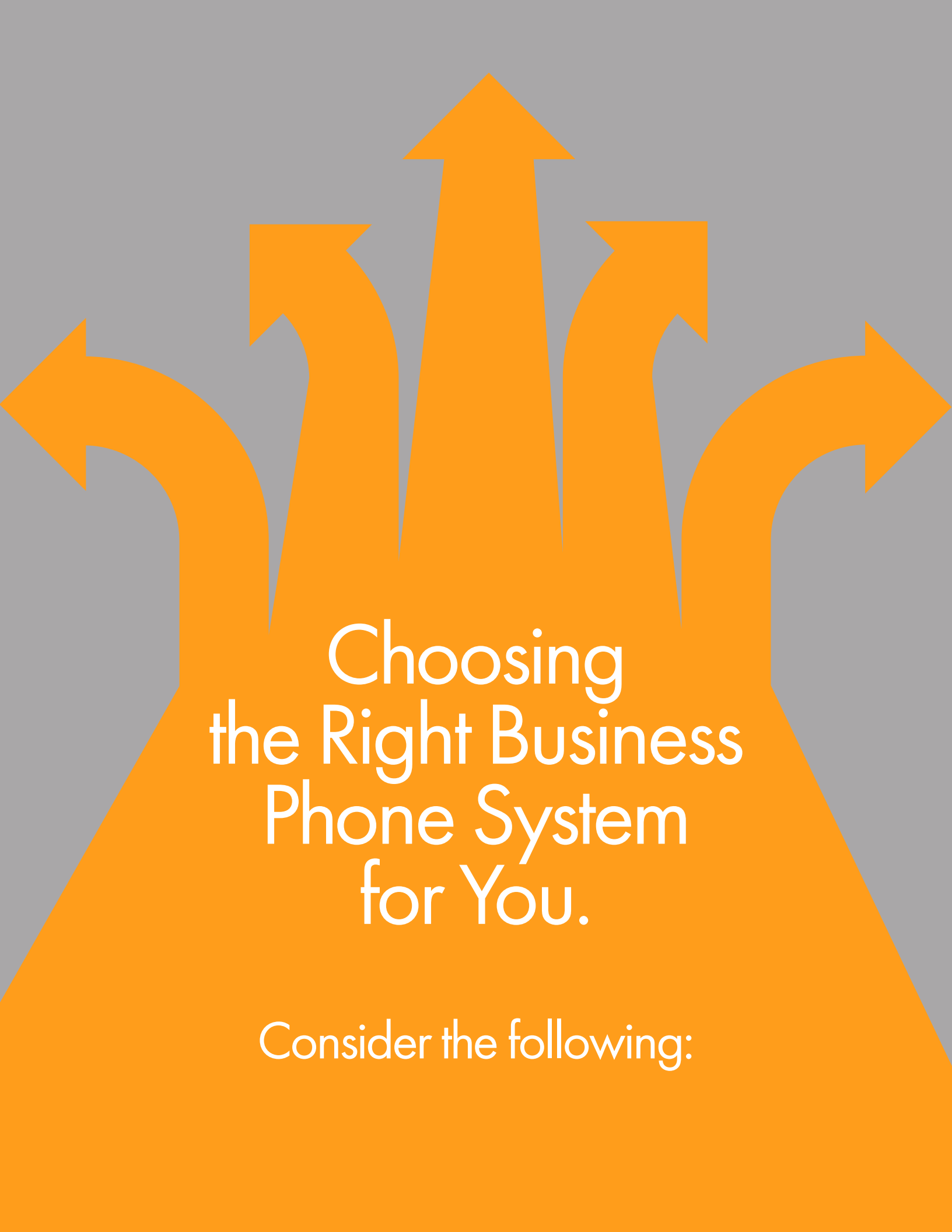
Cons: When you choose a Hosted Voice phone solution, there are very few drawbacks associated with these systems. They allow you to access only the solutions you need, when you need them.

Best for: Rapidly-growing companies operating on a fixed budget, that need a functional, flexible phone system. Companies who don't have the onsite IT staff needed to maintain PBX hardware.

These solutions are also ideal for companies that need quick access to new phone features or have multiple locations and want to move their system to a single platform.

BEWARE: Some solution providers offer Cloud-based VoIP systems which can have sky-high technology fees. A Hosted Voice phone solution offers advanced features and flexibility without the price tag of an onsite PBX, for instance: **MCTV's Hosted Voice doesn't use the public Internet and gives our customers a completely separate data path for Hosted Voice, local service, support, and more.**

Companies using **Hosted Voice systems** can choose from a variety of phone models designed to suit their unique needs, budget, and requirements. Hosted voice systems include unlimited local calling and a variety of other features, including auto-attendants, personalized voicemail, voicemail to email, web-based administrator and user-level controls, and dedicated data connection for voice service.



Choosing the Right Business Phone System for You.

Consider the following:



Staffing Needs

Every company wants to grow. When selecting a business phone system, though, it's essential to focus on how you want your company to grow. For best results, you'll want to choose a business phone system that allows your workers to maintain easy communication access with clients and partners. You'll also want to choose a system that can scale as your company does grow. Simplicity and adaptability are key here.

Essential Features

What are the "must-have" features for your company? Decide what you need to communicate effectively and go with it. Do you need to be able to host conference calls? Do you need call forwarding? If you find that your current system is lacking "must-have" features, pay attention to these and look for a solution that offers them.

Locations

Will your business phone system need to operate in more than one place? If so, you'll need a solution that allows you to communicate easily with the public but also scales to accommodate multiple locations. Most likely, you'll need separate pieces of phone system hardware in each of your locations.

Telecommunication Needs

You can choose between a PBX system or a VoIP. Private Branch Exchange systems, or PBXs, route your calls to the right departments or representatives. VoIPs, meanwhile, use centralized pieces of equipment. While a PBX will be more expensive, they're also easier to scale. VoIP systems, meanwhile, can comfortably accommodate multiple locations.



Conclusion: The Ideal Phone System is Right Around the Corner.

Choosing the right business phone system can feel like a daunting task. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be as difficult as it looks. By simply considering the unique needs of your company, you can discern which phone solutions you'll need, and which features you can likely do without. Plus, you'll get an idea of which phone systems will grow with your company, and which won't.

Once you've considered your needs as a company, contact BusinessPro to learn more about available phone services. Our team will be happy to work with you to help you identify the best phone systems for you and to ensure you're getting all the features you need with a Hosted Voice phone system. Please contact us at businesspro@mctvohio.com.

**Contact an MCTV BusinessPro representative at
330-833-4134 or email businesspro@mctvohio.com.**