

How to choose a new telephone provider



With over 1,000 telecommunication companies listed in the UK it is difficult to know what you should be looking out for. It can also be difficult to keep up with the latest technologies and know what can be achieved by using the latest developments in telecommunications.

83% of small and medium-sized enterprises agree they would not be able to function without reliable telecommunication services.

This document will guide you through the top 7 things to look out for when choosing a provider for this critical service.

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1. Familiarise yourself with the latest technologies and what would make a difference to your business and team

When choosing a provider, it is good practice to write a list of features that you use on your current system and any must have additional features.

With changes in the way businesses work you may require users to work whilst on the move, meaning a solution with a good unified communications package is a must have. You may have to deal with a large volume of incoming calls so you require auto attendant to easily handle this.

Make sure the system you choose can offer all the required features and ask to see a demonstration of this working - to make sure it works exactly how you require.

We have put together a useful 'Requirement Builder' on the last page to help you decide what features are key to your business.

2. Have a look at the different services the suppliers offer

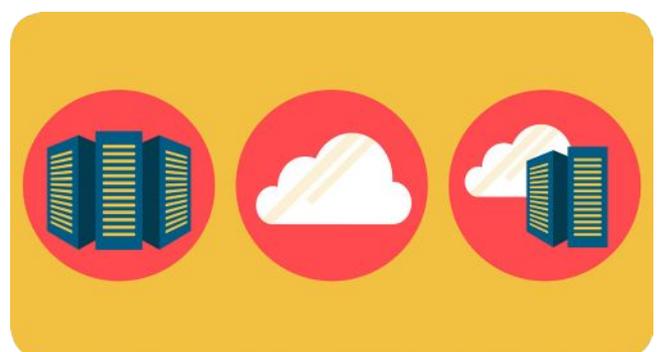
There are three main types of business phone system; cloud, hybrid and on-premise,.

a) **Cloud** handsets connect to a phone system hosted at a data centre using your internet connection. This then breaks out onto the national network using a SIP trunk.

b) **Hybrid** combines the two, so you may have cloud handsets connecting to a data centre and an on-premise system as back-up or local break out on existing analogue lines.

c) **On-premise** systems enable you to have a phone system installed on-site dedicated to your business and will connect to the national network using SIP, ISDN or analogue lines.

If a supplier offers all three solutions or even just on-premise and cloud, you know they are more likely to make an informed decision and select the solution that is right for you. If they are only able to sell you one solution they may push you towards a solution that isn't right for your business needs.



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3. Understand your users' needs

Talk to your team and find out exactly what features they use on the current system and features they would like to have. It is important to speak with a variety of users across the business as each department or user's requirements may differ significantly.

The examples below detail everyday job role telephony requirements:

Managing Director

A managing director's needs or requirements are often quite different from the rest of the organisation. A director may focus more on the analytics and reporting to better understand the service the business is delivering. To understand more about these options please read our guide to Call Recording and Call Analytics.

Receptionist

If you are a business that has a receptionist this is probably one of the most important individual feedback you can gather. They are generally the person answering and transferring the most calls within a business. To simplify this process receptionists will often require a handset with additional features with a reception console attached for additional information and to simplify the transfer procedure. They may also prefer a desktop application for call handling.

Mobile Sales Executive

A mobile sales executive will often be working from a variety of locations sometimes in the office but often out on the road or from remote sites. Mobile users can often benefit from unified communications applications. This allows office based users the visibility of a sales persons phone presence no matter where they are. It also allows the sales person to dial out from the business phone system presenting their work number. **More unified communication features are detailed in the 'Requirement Builder'.**

Customer Service Agent

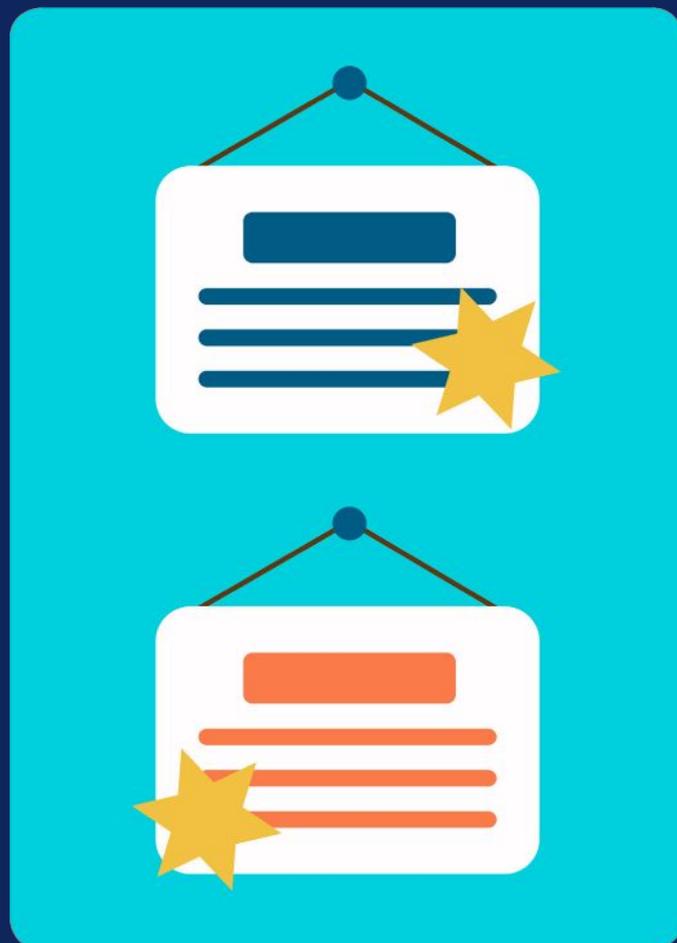
A customer service agent will often be spending long periods of time on the phone. A common requirement is a headset either used with a traditional handset or a desktop UC/softphone application. Depending on the type of business it may also be beneficial to have integration between the phone system and CRM or database applications.



4. Work with trained suppliers

Most major telecommunication manufacturers, including Ericsson-LG, offer training. Make sure the supplier you are looking to use is fully authorised to be selling, installing and supporting the system they are quoting.

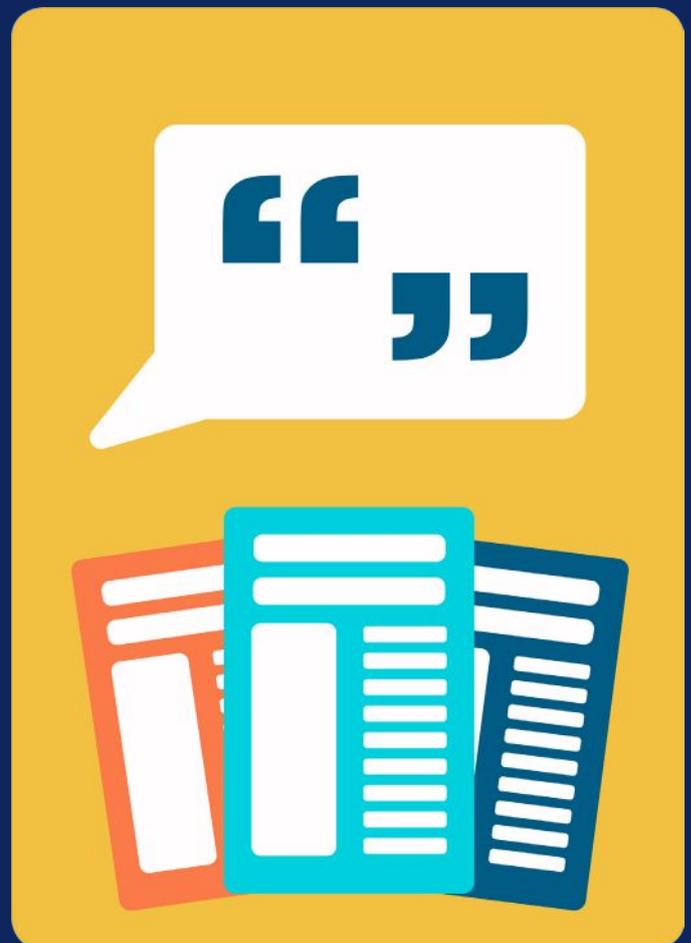
Don't be scared to ask to see the supplier's training certifications and authorised reseller collateral if they are not clearly shown on their website. This should give you peace of mind that the supplier is proficient in installing and maintaining the solution. It should also mean you are not mis-sold a system being promised features it cannot deliver, as the sales person will fully understand the system and features available.



5. Ask for reference sites

All good telephony providers will be able to supply you with case studies and customer testimonials of similar solutions they have previously implemented. Look through the case studies and testimonials in detail and take time to fully review the solutions they have provided.

Telephony providers will often be able to provide you with contact details for customers that you can talk to directly. Give them a call and ask them about how happy they are with the service they have been provided. Go into specifics about any issues they have previously experienced and how proficient the staff were at getting them resolved.



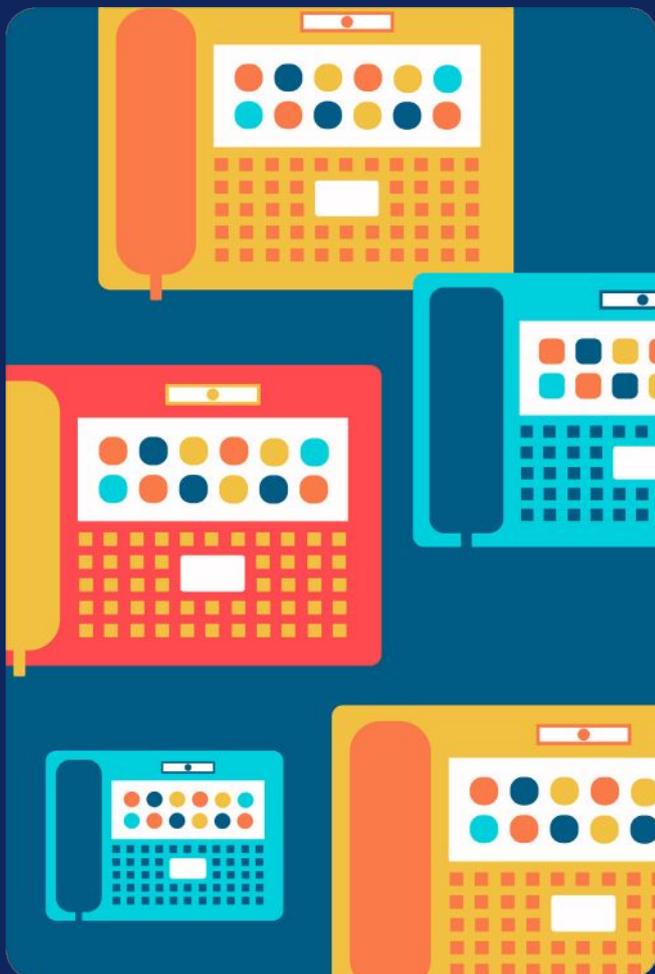
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6. Choose a supplier that offers a trusted brand

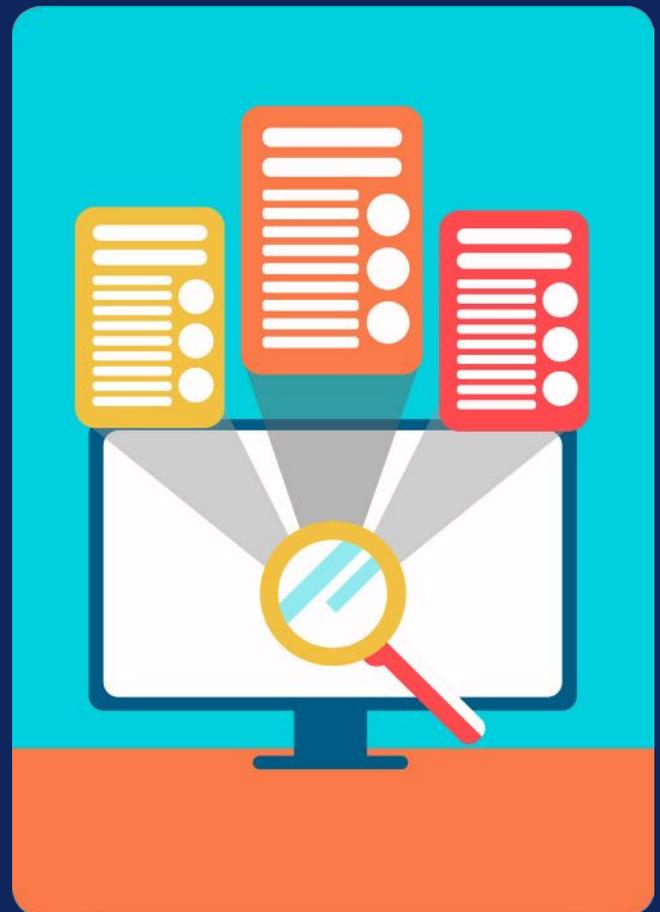
Not all phone system manufacturers are the same and there are hundreds on the market from individual developers to global manufacturers with huge research and development budgets.

Brands like Ericsson-LG are sold in over 60 countries with over 10 million users worldwide. The combination of two of the world's largest technology companies Ericsson and LG deliver reliable and innovative solutions. Ericsson-LG offer on-premises, cloud and hybrid solutions to suit all size of business from single users to worldwide corporate clients.



7. Go with your gut!

Work with a telephony provider and manufacturer you can trust. It is key that you feel the sales person and company understands your business and what you need.



Requirement Builder

Use this form to build your perfect communication solution

Step 1: Select the important functions for your business

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Operations | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reception | <input type="checkbox"/> Warehouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales and Marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Step 2: Which benefits meet your business needs

These benefits are numbered and correspond with the features on the next page

	<i>Must have</i>	<i>Nice to have</i>	<i>Not essential</i>
1 Call recording	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Call reporting (missed calls) & analytics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Click to dial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Contactable anytime anywhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Headset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 High call quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Hot desking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Integration with CRM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Mobile working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Call queuing & automotive call distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Scalability for growing a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Skype for Business integration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Softphone (calling through your computer)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 Video/Voice conferencing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Voicemail to email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16: Android / iOS Client	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Requirement Builder

Step 3: Select your features

Place tick in box

SIP

SIP Trunks replace traditional phone lines and routes calls over a data connection and then break out onto the national network. SIP Trunks are easily scalable and often lower in cost than traditional ISDN.

ISDN

ISDN is the traditional method of routing calls via a digital line. ISDN is due to be switched off by 2025 with SIP as the main replacement. It may still be sensible to use ISDN in premises that do not have the option of high speed internet.

Unified Communications

Unified Communications allows users to work more efficiently. UC features generally include instant messaging, video collaboration, interactive directories and call control via desktop and mobile applications.

Cloud or hosted telephony

Cloud systems have no requirement for a physical phone system on site. They just require a handset or a UC application and utilise your data connection to connect to a phone system in a data centre.

Mobile apps

Mobile unified communications applications are a useful tool for users that are often on the move. Common features often include presence, instant messaging, conference calling and video calling.

Desktop apps

Desktop unified communications can either be used as call control for a desk phone or used as a standalone softphone with a headset connected to your PC. Common features often include collaboration and screen sharing, presence, instant messaging, conference calling, video calling and CRM integration.

Requirement Builder

Place tick in box

Skype for Business

For businesses that have already adopted Skype for Business as their unified communications strategy integration into a phone system is often essential. This enables users to utilise all Skype for Business features and enables you to dial out from your business phone system.

Voicemail

Voicemail is an essential feature for most users. More advanced voicemail features include voicemail to email and remote voicemail access.

Auto Attendant

Auto Attendant often referred to as a digital receptionist is a common feature at most businesses. This gives users the ability to select from a series of options to easily route calls to the correct department or individual.

Queues/ACD

Automatic Call Distribution groups or Queues are used for more complex call distribution. They allow you to have multiple marketing and queue announcements with the ability to configure complex call distribution.

Mobile twinning

Mobile Twinning allows you to pair your desk phone with your mobile. You can select whether your desk phone rings simultaneously at the same time as your mobile phone or add a time delay.

Collaboration

Collaboration tools better connect your workforce and allow users to more easily collaborate. Features and applications may include desktop and mobile UC applications, voice conferencing, video conferencing and screen sharing.

Contact us today for more information on
how we can help your business.

www.datakom.co.uk

