

Consumer's Guide To Buying a Business Telephone System

Inside this Guide you will discover:

- **Top 5 Telephone Buying Rip-offs and How to Avoid Them!**
- What Types of Telephone Systems Exist Today?
- Differences of Digital, VoIP and Hybrid Telephone Systems.
- What Type of Telephone System is Best for Your Company?
- What Types of Telephone Lines are Available?
- Tips for Buying a Telephone System.
- Questions to Ask When Choosing a Telephone Vendor.

Provided as an educational service by
Always Better Communications, Inc.



“Our promise to you is to only advise on the products that will enhance your business or save you money”.....Doug Pauly and Bryan Witting.

Dear Communications Manager,

We understand choosing a telephone system is not an easy decision. With the many different options out there today, this decision can be confusing and overwhelming. We have developed this fact filled guide to assist you in making an informed budget-wise decision that best suits the communication needs of your company.

If you have any specific questions that are not covered in this guide or something you would like explained further, please feel free to call us at (330) 478-4048. We are always happy to help.

Sincerely,
Always Better Communications, Inc.

About ABC:

ABC is a local voice and data communication contractor, founded in 1996 by two professionals with over 50 years of combined experience in the industry. Since our doors first opened, we have been dedicated to providing businesses across northeastern Ohio with high-quality connectivity solutions and service.

ABC staffs the highest skilled and trained technicians to service and install your voice and data needs. Each technician has access to the latest technologies in testing equipment and continues to upgrade his knowledge and skills through mandatory training. We offer fast and immediate service for all your communication needs.

Call to obtain a **Free Cost Savings Evaluation** on your current telephone system or computer network wiring. Then you can experience our competitive rates, highly personalized service and become one of our satisfied customers.

Remember, we offer 24-hour service, anytime you have a problem we are here to help.

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Top 5 Telephone Buying Rip-offs and How to Avoid Them!

- 1. Padding the Lease** - When selling a lease, the Vendor has an opportunity to add commission to the lease once the contract is signed and the information is submitted to the leasing company.

We have seen many businesses buy a telephone system because the price of the system was lower than the competitor but in the end they actually paid more than the competitor's price due to the Vendor's added commission.

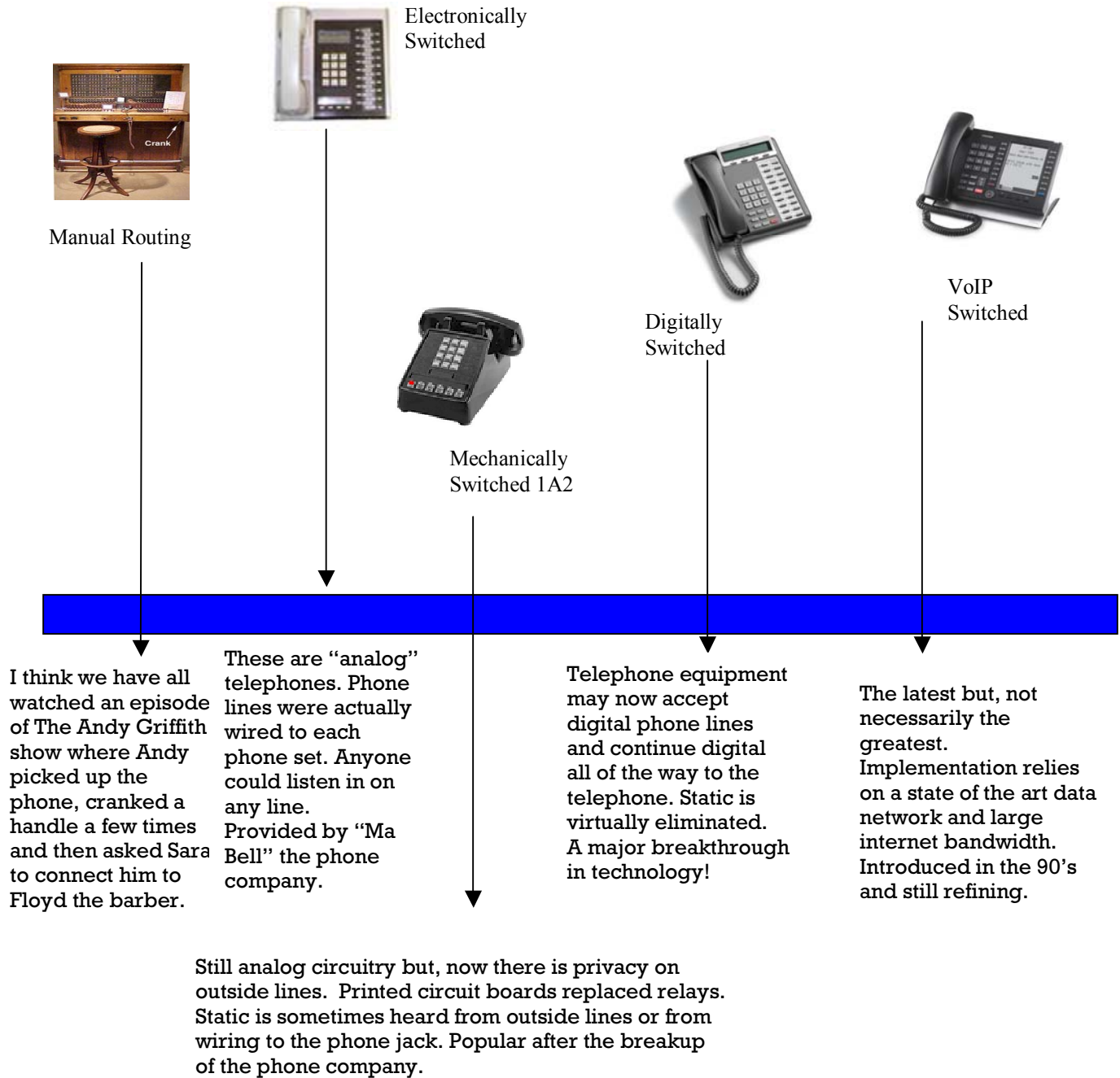
Always Better Communications will NEVER add extra commission onto a lease.
- 2. Overselling** - We equate this to buying a cell phone. Some people buy a cell phone with every feature possible but when it comes down to actually using the cell phone all you do is dial a number and talk. Don't let anyone talk you into buying features you will never use or grow into.
- 3. Maintenance Contracts** - In all the years we have been working in communications, we have never seen a customer use the amount of service that they paid for buying a Maintenance Contract. Although we offer Maintenance Contracts we do not promote them. We feel you should pay for service as it is needed. Also, beware most maintenance contracts are misleading. For example, they may not cover a telephone damaged due to a drink being spilled on it or customer negligence. If you do agree to a Maintenance Contract be sure to read the fine print.
- 4. Being Sold Short** - We have seen many times Vendors leave out necessary equipment in order to come in with the lowest bid. Then the installation begins and they will approach you saying you did not disclose everything you needed or, it was missed in their survey. No one is perfect and occasionally some items may be missed but keep in mind, all telephone systems require the same basic equipment to perform the same functions.
- 5. Compare "Apples to Apples"** - Be sure when receiving multiple quotes from different Vendors that all quotes have the same information. Number of telephones, outside lines, voicemail, features, etc. An honest Vendor will ask for an equipment list from the competitors quote so that they are comparing like solutions.

What Types of Telephone Systems Exist Today?

Today, there are mainly three types of telephone systems:

1. **Voice over Internet Protocol**, commonly known as **VoIP**.
2. **Digital**, sometimes referred to as **Time Division Multiplexing (TDM)**.
3. **Hybrid**, which is a combination of VoIP and Digital.

Here is a brief timeline of how the telephone system got to where it is today:



Differences of Digital, VoIP and Hybrid Telephone Systems.

	<u>Digital</u>	<u>VoIP</u>	<u>Hybrid</u>
Most Reliable.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low Cost.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of use.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Work from Home.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connect Multiple Locations.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No Data Network in Place.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Works with "Out of Date Data Network".....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires "State of the Art Data Network".....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ability for Customer Moves.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maintenance Agreement Required.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customer able to Program.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sound Quality.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does Not Require External Power for each phone.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is Digital (TDM)?

Time Division Multiplexing is the technology used by telephone system for the past 30 years. It allows multiple signal types to travel over the same path.

TDM had a real advantage over the older electro-mechanical 1A2 system because you could run a small cable to each telephone instead of a 25 pair cable. The disadvantage is that you can only have a telephone within the direct reach of a cable run. With these systems the central controller usually holds all the intelligence and the telephones (end points) are generally dumb devices, meaning you can unplug one and replace with another of the same type without losing any of the programming.

TDM system will continue to sell well in this market for many years or until the price of IP components become so inexpensive it will be too costly to build more TDM gear.

What is VoIP?

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is used to send data packets from one computer to another. It is based on an IP addressing system which routers understand and forward your packets to the desired location. The common use is obviously the Internet, but also considers that your email and your inter-office communications use the IP protocol. There are some real advantages of IP; you can plug your telephone in anywhere on the network and it works, depending on the system you can take your telephone home and plug it into your broadband connection and it works.

You can connect multiple locations together to act in unison as a single system. Since everything is a data packet many new features have and will continue to be added. Presence gives you the ability to send calls elsewhere depending on what you are doing or even depending on who calls you. Receive your voicemail messages as .wav files in your email and the list goes on.

What is Hybrid?

A hybrid system would be a combination of Digital and VoIP.

What Type of Telephone System is Best for Your Company?

Answer the following Yes / No questions to find out.

1. Do you need to communicate between two or more locations?
Yes / No
2. Are there long distance charges between locations?
Yes / No
3. Would you like all locations to be answered by a single operator/receptionist? Yes / No
4. Would you like all locations to share one Voicemail system?
Yes / No
5. Do you have workers, such as outside sales people that work from their home?
Yes / No
6. Are you constantly moving personnel from one office to the other? Yes / No
7. Do you have CAT5e or better data cabling in your business?
Yes / No
8. Do you have the latest data “switches” and “routers” within your data network?
Yes / No

If you answered yes to:

0 questions –

A “**Digital**” Telephone System sounds right for your needs.

1 to 5 questions –

A “**Hybrid**” Telephone System is right up your alley. A Hybrid system is the best of both worlds but at a lower cost than VoIP.

5 or more questions –

You may want to consider a “**VoIP**” Telephone System. The most important question is: “Do you have the latest data switches and routers?” Because VoIP requires what we call “**Quality of Service (QoS)**”. Your telephone conversation is converted to “digital packets”, like those used in your data network and Internet, your telephone conversation is moving with your data. QoS tells your data to slow down to let the voice go through. Think of your voice as a passenger train and your data as a freight train: the freight train has to pull over to let the passenger train go through. QoS is an option in newer data switches and routers.

What Types of Telephone Lines are Available?

POTS: Plain Old Telephone Service. These telephone lines have been around since the invention of the telephone company. They are *Analog* in nature, much like a vinyl record. They are the most popular lines and most commonly what people have in their homes.

T1: The first way to bring in digital telephone lines, with each line having a telephone number assigned to it. There are two ways to interface this circuit to your telephone system. The first way utilizes a *Channel Bank*, usually provided by the telephone company that converts these digital lines to POTS lines. The second way is to interface these lines to a *T1* circuit card in your telephone system. Not used very much these days, commonly used for companies with multiple locations that want to connect their locations.

ISDN/PRI: (Primary Rate Interface) This is the next generation T1 circuit. Sometimes referred to only as *PRI*, this circuit can have unlimited telephone numbers assigned to it but limits the number of people talking to 23. The main advantage to this circuit is that you have 23 voice paths for the cost of about 14 POTS lines. Employees may have their own DID (**D**irect **I**nward **D**ial) telephone number, eliminating the need for callers to go through the receptionist or auto attendant. Incoming Caller ID is provided, usually, free of charge. This is most commonly used for customers with more than 14 telephone lines.

Integrated PRI: This is basically the same as the ISDN/PRI described above except, Internet access is also available with this circuit. When there is no voice traffic, all of the PRI bandwidth, 1.54 MB, is available for Internet access. As more people talk on the PRI, the bandwidth for Internet is lowered. Most popular with companies that need less than 14 telephone lines but need Internet access.

Compressed Integrated PRI: This is basically the same as the Integrated PRI except, the voice portion is *compressed* in order to give more bandwidth to Internet access. BE CAREFUL, Fax's, Modems, and Credit Card Machines do not like to be compressed. Be sure to ask your telephone company if they have solved this problem.

SIP (Session Initiation Protocol): This is the latest way to deliver your telephone lines using VoIP. Not all telephone companies offer SIP. Not all SIP lines are compatible with all telephone systems. Be sure you discuss this with your Vendor and your telephone company.

Tips for Buying a Telephone System.

Ask other businesses how they did it.

If you like the way a telephone system works at another business, seek out the owner and ask them what they use and how much cost was involved. Talk to at least five other business owners to get a feel for pricing, Vendors, and options before you buy.

Don't under invest in your telephone system.

Although the Internet now plays a huge role in connecting businesses to customers, clients, and partners, telephones remain the key to business success. If customers call your business and feel your telephone system is unprofessional, they may opt not to do business with your company. If calls are routed incorrectly, if callers get disconnected, or if they are faced with a bewildering array of automated options, you may lose their business forever - and you will never even know about the lost opportunity. The bottom line....Invest the time and resources to get it right.

Take advantage of systems that grow with new technology.

The telephone systems we offer have positioned themselves in a leadership role in migration and expansion strategy. These systems have the ability to grow and expand with your business, protecting your original investment. This means you may keep much of your original equipment as your business grows and technology changes. Many systems out there do not offer this level of investment protection.

Prioritize your features.

Do you need an auto-attendant feature? Will you need to handle conference calls? Do you want music-on-hold? Do you need to monitor telephone usage by employee? What are your voicemail needs? By listing out what feature you want, you can create a checklist that will allow you to rank the varying telephone systems and find the best telephone system for your company.

Find a good telephone system Vendor.

You will need outside assistance for installation and programming of most telephone systems. Once you have determined the type of system you want, finding a good telephone Vendor is the key to success. Beware of what we call "Trunkers", a one-man show selling product from their car. They may be less expensive but who will be there to help you when your system is down and they are sick, on vacation or servicing another customer? Or how does their warranty work? Will they still be around if something happens to your system?

Read "Questions to Ask When Choosing a Telephone Vendor" for more information.

Consider VoIP telephone systems.

The latest in computer telephony - Voice over IP (VoIP) technology - allows businesses to place and receive calls using the Internet. VoIP is perfect if your business is distributed (e.g. you have telecommuters working out of their home offices). This is the future of telephone systems, and if you've seen that a VoIP system may be right for your company you would do well to get started with it now. It can help to keep you connected and keep overall costs down.

Install extra cabling

If you need to cable your office for the telephone system, install more cabling than needed to handle your current requirements. Telephone system experts suggest that you double the cabling you currently need. Although it adds to the cost of installation, it's a huge savings if you may need to add cables in the future.

Consider leasing and financing options.

Ask your vendor whether you can pay for your system over time. This can be a big benefit if your current cash is limited. But, beware leasing costs can drastically increase the price of your telephone system.

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Telephone Vendor.

How long has the Vendor been in business?

Always Better Communications has been in business since 1996. Five of its employees have over twenty years in the business.

What experience do their sales people have?

All of ABC's sales engineers started their careers as technicians, installing and maintaining telephone systems. They know what you need and more importantly, what you do not need.

What qualifications/certifications do their technicians have?

We do not sell "over the counter" telephone systems. In order to sell commercial grade systems our technicians are required to be factory trained and certified. They are constantly being trained on new peripherals and techniques and even attend local technical colleges for computer, networking, and IT courses.

How is the telephone system installation implemented?

Once the contract is signed we setup a time to create your "Job Package" with you. We will sit down and discuss how the system needs to be programmed and what features should be used. An installation date is set to your liking. Equipment is installed at your site and programmed per the "Job Package". Once the installation and programming is finished, your sales engineer will train your employees with a "live" telephone **before** switching you to the new system. The telephone lines will be switched first, then the receptionist's telephone, then the remaining telephones one at a time. We will be on-site the following day to help with the handling of calls and to make any minor programming changes.

Who is your contact after the sale/installation?

When you buy from ABC, you will deal with one person, your sales engineer. We believe no one knows you and your company more than the sales engineer. If they are away from the office, another one of our sales engineers or office personnel will take over. We will never leave you without technical support or service.

References?

ABC has a list of references we would be happy for you to contact.

Any reputable Vendor should have many customers they are able to refer you to. Call the Vendor references and check up on their customer service record.

Hours of Operation?

ABC office hours are M-F 7:30am – 4pm. After hours we have technician's on-call so we are always available to help. This is a very important question due to the fact your phone system can go down at anytime. You need to make sure the Vendor you choose is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Working telephones are essential to most businesses whatever time of day it may be.

Proudly Partnered with



Proud Members of





**WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU
FOR YOUR INTEREST**

Services Provided by ABC:

- **Free Cost Savings Evaluation** (mention this brochure)
- Telephone Systems / Voicemail Installation and Design
- Service on Most Major Brands of Telephone Systems
- Computer Network Cabling and Design
- Paging Systems-Service & Installation
- Data Network Assessment
- Security Cameras (CCTV)
- Fiber Optics Installation
- Voice over IP Systems (VoIP)

If you have any questions or comments, or if you would like a sales engineer to stop by for your **Free Cost Savings Evaluation**, please call (330) 478-4048.

*All of us at ABC look forward to working with you.
Doug, Bryan, Tyler, Howard, Lucas, Alex, Matt, Nick,
Joe, Rose, Denise and Kristina*

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