

17 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Telecom Provider

For a complete list of features and their explanations see the chapter on Telephone Systems.

1. Tell us about your business?
2. What kind of education, knowledge, experience and expertise do you have?
Check for any certifications or partnerships with major vendors.
3. Which vendor solutions do you offer?
Major hosted VOIP vendors include Star2Star, 8X8, RingCentral, Intermedia, etc.
4. How will you determine the number of lines needed for our business?
Some companies offer per seat model and others per line model and some have both models. In the per seat model, you have to pay for each phone or extension. In the per line model, you can have a certain number of lines and any number of phones or extensions.
5. How many minutes are included per line?
6. Do you offer unified communication? What features are included?
Check for following features:
 - Call waiting
 - Music on-hold
 - Call queue
 - Call bursting – adding more lines on the fly as needed
 - Interactive Voice Response (IVR)
 - Group extension
 - Call forwarding
 - iPhone and Android apps
 - Voice mail to text messages
 - Soft phone on computers – that allows you to make calls from a computer using a dial pad
 - Integration with CRM
 - Call recording
 - Audio conference
 - Video conference
 - Chat or instant messaging
 - Auto attendants
 - Ring groups
 - Intercom
 - Line pooling (sharing lines across multiple locations)
 - Online fax
 - Reporting, etc.
7. Do you have web based fax solution?

Using web based fax solutions, you can check your faxes from anywhere, and the faxes are in a searchable PDF format.

8. Is your fax solution HIPAA compliant?

The healthcare industry needs to have a HIPAA compliant fax solution.

9. What kind of architecture does your carrier use?

There are three types of architectures available – On-premise, hosted and hybrid. Hybrid is the best of the breed; they have some hardware components on premise and other services are hosted in the cloud to ensure the best path call routing. Some carriers have multiple data centers located across the US to provide best call quality.

10. What kind of phones do you offer?

Popular brands include Polycom, Yealink, Cisco, etc. Some companies also offer cordless phones.

11. What features are available on the phones?

Some phones are very basic and can handle only two lines. Others are advanced with many features and can handle multiple lines. Some even have touch interfaces on the phones. Some phones are powered by power cords, while others are powered using PoE (Power over Ethernet) switches and Ethernet cables. See also PoE.

12. What is the cost of hardware, software, installation and configuration?

13. What will our monthly cost be?

14. Do you offer training for the users?

15. What kind of support do you offer?

16. What kind of guarantees do you offer?

17. Why should we choose you?

Check to see how they differentiate themselves from other competitors.

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