

The 1 2 3

of buying a cloud
telephony solution



Introduction

So, you're looking to replace your telephony system. Maybe you want to improve your customers' experience, or maybe support hybrid working for your staff. What you'll find is a telecoms market that's super competitive, and with so much competition no shortage of contenders for your business.

So how can you navigate the competitive offers and how do you determine what's the best deal?

We've put together this simple '3 point guide' to help you cut through the hype to get to the solution you need.

1. Are you buying technology or a service?

You've seen the ad's and may well have had the demo, there are some great looking telephone handsets available today. Large screen, colour, easy to use, with a host of features like call forwarding or call recording.

Of course the hardware technology has some importance, after all, people will queue for hours to buy the latest Phone, but ask yourself, is it the telephone that improves my business?

Behind the telephone are the important services that will determine whether your new cloud telephone system delivers reliable, seamless services, or whether your business suffers outages, disruption, and the frustration of getting the support you need.

It's a fact of life in such a competitive market as telecoms that many providers will not own any of the technology they are selling. It's a market heavily dominated by white labelled, resold, and repurposed services and technologies. In fact it goes further because it can be hard, if not impossible, to find out who the real owners are. This isn't apparent during the slick demo, but it becomes a problem after the sale.

Why is ownership, or lack of ownership, a problem?

The first and most obvious reason will be 'who do you contact when you have a problem'? Will you be speaking to a support team or an account manager? It may not sound important, but it can make a big difference.

When the technology fails, and it will, then the problem isn't a technology issue; the problem is that you have lost your service. Your customers will now have a problem, your staff will now have a problem. What you need now, is a partner who will own your problem, and work for you to solve it quickly.

- Ask yourself. Am I buying technology, telephone handsets and features? Or am I buying a solution to improve the service I provide to my customers and staff?

"Why is ownership, or lack of ownership, a problem?"

2. Is your vendor on your side?

Have you ever contacted a support organisation only to spend the first 5 minutes of the call explaining who you are and why you are calling? It's frustrating. It gets worse when you are then told that 'I don't deal with this area but I can pass you to someone who can'. We know what comes next, the same. The same 5 minutes explaining who you are and why you are calling.

It's an all too familiar cycle so if your telecoms provider doesn't own the services or infrastructure they've sold you, then they're unlikely to be able to solve your problem. If the provider can't solve the problem then you will be dealing with a third (or fourth) party company who you will never have met. You know too well what happens next!

Would account management help? There's a big difference between customer support and account management. If your vendor provides you with an account manager you get the reassurance of knowing you have someone who is as committed to your business as you are. It is the difference between having a number to call, or a name to call.

- Ask yourself. Will I have the support of a dedicated account manager who understands my needs and is committed to my business?



3. Who really owns your cloud telephony solution?

Surprisingly, many cloud telephony solutions on the market aren't owned or controlled by the company trying to sell them to you. The vendor you're speaking to may just be a sales engine whose goal in life is solely to make sales.

On the face of it this may not be a problem but consider their motivations. You have a set of business problems that you are trying to solve. Maybe you want to provide better telephony services to improve your customers' experience with your brand. Or maybe you want to make hybrid working more efficient and productive for your employees. The vendor is less likely to be motivated towards solving your issues and more motivated towards securing a deal.

Why? If they are reselling another vendor's technology they have no involvement in research or product development and so no real involvement or control in whether their solution is the best fit for your needs. They are selling you what they have, and they'll try and make it fit. It takes us back to the telephone handset.

Focusing on handsets detracts from what happens behind the handset. The services you need run over a network, connected to the internet. The reliability and availability of the network is far more important than the performance of the handset. Now what happens if I don't own the network?

When a vendor doesn't have ownership and control of the network that really runs your service then they will be entered into back to back service level agreements with the ultimate provider. These service level agreements are between the provider and your vendor. They aren't tailored specifically to your needs. They can't be. Your service is no higher priority than any other customers of that vendor.

- Ask yourself. Does the prospective vendor own any of the infrastructure or solution that they are proposing and how might this impact the availability and resilience of my service?

And finally, the done deal

So the deal is done and you have a new cloud telephony service in place and supporting your business goals. If you follow this simple guide we are confident that you'll have a service that will deliver the availability that you need, and a vendor who is as committed to your business as you are. As you look to FIND the right solution here is a reminder of the three simple questions you need to ask your prospective provider:

1. Am I buying technology, or am I solving a business problem? Don't be deflected by smart looking technology.
2. Will I get a dedicated account manager? You want to be supported by someone as committed to your success as you are, not hanging on the line for the next available operator.
3. Does your vendor own any of the services or infrastructure they are selling you? If not, your service availability will be dependent on third and fourth party relationships that you will need to manage.

