



The DynaSis Education Series for C-Level Executives

Your Telephone System as a Business Building Asset

As part of your overall IT infrastructure, your telephone system becomes a valuable tool, not just an expense.

Remember high school English class? “A rose is a rose is a rose” is from Gertrude Stein’s poem, “Sacred Emily,” and is her most famous quotation. The modern day version might go something like: A phone is a phone is a phone. There are many business products and services these days that have become “commoditized”, meaning, the product itself, from manufacturer-to-manufacturer, or vendor-to-vendor, is basically the same. The only real difference is the price you pay. Paper and pens. Toner. Merchant services. Banking. Many people think the same is true of business telephone systems. A phone is a phone is a phone.

Not so.

The right telephone system, with the right features, can make a big difference and actually turn your business telephone into a powerful asset that drives and helps grow your business.

The USA has become a service economy and no matter what your business, chances are that in order for you to succeed and grow you have to provide a level of customer/client service that few people would have considered necessary not so many years ago. Add to this the fact that no matter what your business, your competition is actively trying to steal your customers. Often, the only “glue” that holds your customers is loyalty, and that loyalty is often based on your ability to “wow” them with superior service.

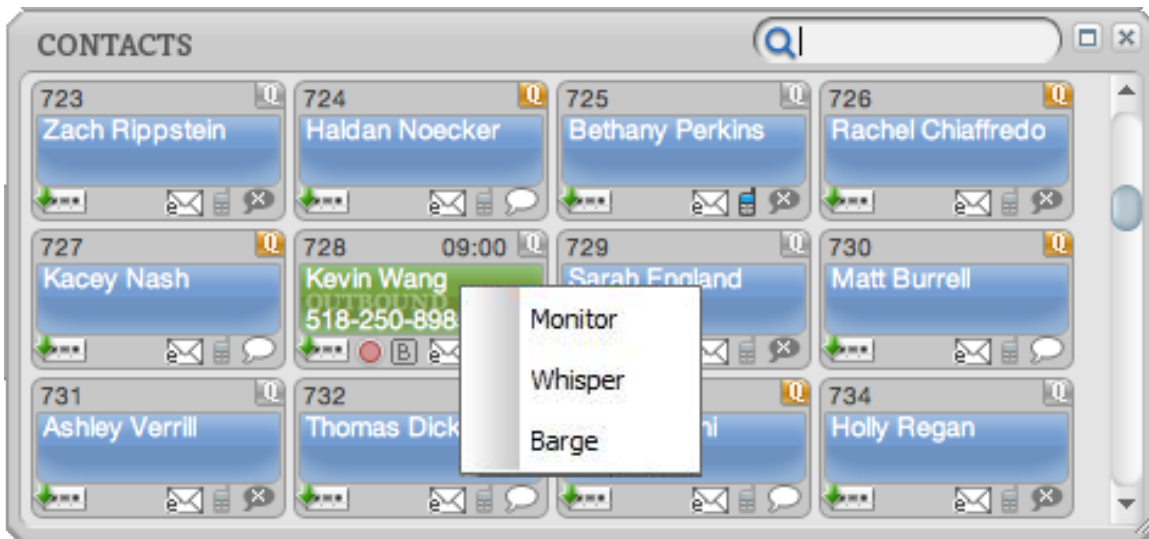
On another level, you need to answer the question: how effective a sales tool is your telephone system? “But a telephone is a telephone!” Again, not so. Let’s look at some of the features truly modern telephone systems offer and you can decide for yourself if upgrading your communication tools makes sense for your business.

“Find Me, Follow Me.” No, it’s not Dr. Seuss. FMFM is an important feature that provides you the same flexibility you currently have with your email. When an email arrives, you can open it and respond on your desktop computer, or on any mobile device, including your smart phone. The “Follow Me” part of FMFM enables you to route your incoming calls to whichever phone you will be near...your office, your cell, your home, or wherever. “Find Me” allows you to set your system so that if you receive a call and you don’t answer, it rings the next phone in your chain and, when you don’t answer that one, it rings the next, then the next, etc. You can even set the system to ring all your phones at the same time so no matter which phone you are near, you don’t miss the call. FMFM can be an important asset for sales people or anyone else who can’t afford to miss a call.

Voicemail Transcription. How often have you received an unimportant voice message, but had to listen to what seemed an interminable amount of time before you were able to decide just how unimportant that call was? Or, do you receive a lot of voice messages and by the time you listen to them all you are ready to climb the wall? Voicemail transcription solves that problem. Using advanced quality voice recognition software, your emails are turned into written messages that you can quickly scan to determine whether or not you want to read them fully or delete. By the way, it is much faster to read the transcription than listen to the original audio message. It is also way easier to scroll back to an important part of a long message than listen to the whole message again...and again.

Expansion. So, way back when your business only had five people, you bought a phone system that could expand to 10 phones. Figured that would be enough. But now you just hired your 11th employee and she needs a telephone. This could be an expensive hire. You also find that you don’t have enough “outside lines” as you grow. Today’s best phone systems are easily expandable. A few clicks plus a new phone set and you’re off and running. And instead of paying someone a lot of money to run new lines from the street into your office for your new “outside lines”, this is all handled through your computer network and the Internet.

Call Control. The digitalization of voice calls enables us to quickly, easily and seamlessly add features that allow us to control the calls coming in and out of our businesses. It also allows any business to effectively operate as a “call center.” You may not think of your business as a call center, but if you have even one or two sales people and/or one or two customer service people, you are a call center. Think of what these next few features, all part of Call Control, can mean in terms of training, service quality, salesmanship, etc. First, look at the image below. This is the HUD, or Heads Up Display, offered by FONALITY, an advanced midsized player in the telephony field.



The 12 boxes represent 12 employees of XYZ Company. (Note the scroll bar on the right. There can be as many employee boxes as you require...all easily added.) Right now, we are hovering over the box for employee Kevin Wang and the HUD is giving us the option to Monitor, Whisper or Barge on Kevin's call.

Monitor: Monitoring is listening in. We hear both sides of Kevin's call, but neither party knows we are doing so.

Whisper: We can speak and Kevin can hear us, but not the person to whom he is speaking: "Hey, Kevin, this guy is ready to close. Go for it!"

Barge: This feature allows you to enter the conversation, much like a conference call. There are discrete ways of doing this, for example, say a manager is listening in as Kevin, a new hire, is inadvertently giving out incorrect information. The manager "barges" in, stating, "Hi, John. This is Bob, Kevin's manager. I just want to say hello and let you know I am also available if I can help you. Has Kevin told you about..." and you can cleverly correct the misinformation that was given out.

Record: Just press that old familiar red button and you have a recording of the call. Always a great training tool. In most states, as long as one party is aware of the recording, it is legal. So if you are aware, you qualify as that one party. (That is the case in Georgia, where we are located.)

Actually, all four of these features are great training tools and can turn your small business into a highly advanced, easily expandable call center. You will also note on the diagram that you can do a number of other cool things, like send your new employee an email right from the panel while

listening in on his conversation. “Kevin, remind me to review with you all the new features of our new 1,000 Jigwatt Flux Capacitor.”

Easy System Management. Years ago it seemed like you needed a degree in engineering from Georgia Tech to work the telephone system. Chances are you didn’t even try to do it yourself; you called your “telephone guy”. Translation: a big bill will soon arrive in the mail. Not so any more. Today’s systems are controlled online through your web browser so that with a few clicks, you give or retract levels of permission, change voicemail greetings, add or delete extensions, check out call statistics, manage sales teams, etc., etc.

The Cloud. If you believe that phone systems housed in your own office are safer and more secure than those in the Cloud, you’re wrong. It’s that simple. Unless you are a large company with a large (expensive) full-time IT staff, it is next to impossible for you to achieve the level of security and reliability you get from the Cloud. (See our recent article: [The Top 3 Reasons to Move to the Cloud.](#))

Softphone: This feature allows you to use your computer or your smartphone as your office phone. In doing so, you can call someone from your smartphone and he/she actually sees your office number on the screen on their telephone. This enables you to make a call from anywhere and have it seem as though you are in your office. Importantly, it also prevents the recipient from gaining access to your cell phone number.

Video Collaboration: Essentially, this works the same as GoToMeeting or Join.Me on your telephone. You can schedule meetings, invite attendees, and you can even join a meeting from your smartphone. This service may cost a few dollars, but is generally a lot less than paying for this functionality from a third party, and it is easier to use because it is part of your telephone system: it is truly unified communication.

Text Messaging: Allows you to send and receive text messages from your desktop computer, using your office phone number. Again, it keeps your cell phone number private.

Outlook Integration: Virtually all VoIP systems today include contact lists. Outlook integration allows you to load your Outlook contacts into your phone system for click to call capability.

Multi-Location: Create a consistent, seamless caller experience between multiple locations or branch offices located anywhere in the world.

Paperless fax: Another service that is available through 3rd parties, but much better, and less expensive, when integrated through your telephone provider.

That’s a lot of features and may make this type of service seem very confusing. The objective is to choose the features that can have the biggest positive impact on your business and go with those first. You can always seamlessly add others later on.

The first part of this paper discussed various features that may be of value to you. Now we are going to discuss the system itself. The telephone systems we are talking about are what are known as VoIP, or Voice Over IP. If you want a long and hard to understand definition of VoIP, here is a link to [Wikipedia](#), but simply put, VoIP is the use of the Internet to make and receive calls and manage your telephone system.

As with many things that are relatively new, people have a whole host of reasons to avoid VoIP. That's too bad because these reasons are generally wrong. Let's look at the most common:

With our old fashioned system, if the power goes out, we still have phone service. Yes, that once was a concern, but today's modern phone systems almost always come with battery back-up giving you many hours of back-up time (make sure you ask about that!) And, by the way, since most "legacy" phone systems now run on fiber optic cable, there is a good chance they will go out when the power goes out.

VoIP call quality is lacking. This may be true if you do not have sufficient bandwidth, but most businesses are now located in areas with tremendous bandwidth capacity that can more than handle the calls. But, by all means, make sure your carrier can supply you the bandwidth you need before you make the switch. With proper bandwidth, your call quality should be excellent.

Why change phone systems when my old system still works, and is paid for? On some levels this may make sense, but when you dig deeper, here are some other considerations:

1: Every year, through retirement, there are fewer and fewer technicians who actually know how to work on these older systems. Younger techs are not being taught how to work with them. And as these older systems get still older, they will need more service. Long waits for service will become more and more common.

2: As long as you keep your old system, you are tied to your existing phone provider's annual maintenance and service contract fees, which are expensive because of the service that is required.

3: You will probably find that any initial cost for a new system is soon offset by the monthly savings, plus the convenience of not having to call and wait for a technician to come out every time you need to make a change to the system.

4: We want 911 service. This was a valid concern in the past but no longer. Properly installed, your VoIP phone system will give you the same 911 service to which you are accustomed.

If you are still running your business on an older “legacy” telephone system, it certainly makes sense to investigate the benefits you might receive by converting to a newer VoIP based system. We believe you will be pleasantly surprised by their cost effectiveness and delighted with the functionality. The proper business telephone system can be a true business asset.

DynaSis is an Atlanta IT services and cloud computing provider for small and mid-sized businesses. All of our solutions focus on helping companies achieve the three fundamental IT necessities of the modern business—Availability, Security and Mobility. We specialize in on-demand and on-premise managed IT services, VoIP telephony, managed cloud infrastructure, desktops and backups, and professional hardware and equipment installation. For more information about DynaSis’ IT support and services, visit www.dynasis.com.

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