

Optimizing Your Phone Lines: Shrink Costs While Preserving Communications Integrity

More than one vendor has probably tried to sell you on the cost benefits of dumping your old copper lines for the fast efficiency of a T1, PRI or SIP platform. And they're right. Through these technologies, with their unlimited local and long distance, your organization can save thousands per month. But what you need to realize is that replacing almost all of your analog lines with high-speed is not necessarily the most cost-effective option.

Usually, the first 5-6 lines will carry 80% of voice traffic. Since most organizations carry 14 lines or more, this means bandwidth is wasted — bandwidth that your company is paying for. And you must also consider the continuity of your voice communications. Most vendors will try to maximize the number of high-speed lines they sell you in order to maximize their profits. But if you only have 1 or 2 copper lines to rely on in the event of an outage, that will not be nearly enough to protect critical business communications. However, there are strategies to ensure that you are using high-speed lines in the most efficient manner possible, while always keeping your business connected to the outside world.

Three Strategies to Get the Most Value from High-Speed Communications

There are three primary strategies to employ to ensure that you are gaining the most telecommunications value for your business. They include:

Capping

The first step is to find the right balance of analog and high-speed lines within your organization. Consider the example of a company that uses 14 analog lines for an average usage of 38,000 minutes per month, at a cost of \$.05 cents per minute. If this business keeps 6 analog lines for an average monthly cost of \$30 per line, and switches 8 lines to high speed unlimited service at a charge of \$25 per line, look at what they could save.

Comparison of All Analog versus Analog and High-Speed Hybrid

All Analog Company	Analog + High-Speed Company
14 Analog Lines	6 Analog + 8 High-Speed Lines
38,000 minutes@ \$.05/minute	\$30/line x 6 + \$25/line x 8
\$1,900 monthly charge	\$400 monthly charge

Companies with a typical monthly phone bill in the \$200-\$1,200 range will benefit the most from this approach. But the value of a capping strategy does not stop with cost savings. By keeping 6 analog lines, you are maintaining voice communications assurance in the event of an interruption with your high-speed service. By setting up a Direct Trunk Overflow system, calls can be rerouted to analog lines in case of a failure. The copper lines should be used for inbound calls to ensure that customers can always reach your



102 Timbertrace Ct.
Columbia, SC 29212
1-866-IDEACOM (433-2266)
www.ideacom.org

organization. Use the unlimited lines for high-volume outbound calls. If there is an outage, you can provide your sales teams with a dial-around code to allow them to use the analog lines.

Many carriers will be unwilling to split service up between analog and high-speed in this fashion. In this case, just use two separate carriers, one for analog and one for high-speed, to get a comprehensive phone system that truly will meet your needs.

Always insist that you keep your current business numbers when adding new phone lines. It is essential to prevent any confusion for your customers, particularly customers who may not have done business with you for some time. This can also eliminate the expense of a marketing campaign designed to raise awareness of any change in company contact information.

ANAC

The second strategy is to ensure that all of your current lines are still being used. Your company could be still be paying for an old modem or credit card approval line that is no longer necessary. Don't trust your phone bill to identify unused lines. Certain lines, such as an alarm line, might not show usage in your monthly statement, but are still a critical part of operations.

Have a phone tech come into your business to ANAC every phone line within your organization. That's the best way to know exactly what you are paying for.

Cramming

Always review your monthly phone statement for unnecessary fees and charges. The FCC requires that fees for services such as yellow pages be added to your bill. In the telecommunications industry, this practice is known as "cramming," but what many do not know is that you can request that your carrier remove these charges from your statement. Look for fees from companies such as "ILD" and "ESBI" to locate cramming charges.

High-speed voice communications are definitely where every organization is headed. The potential cost savings and operational efficiency from technologies such as SIP Trunking are tremendous. But you need to take a well-planned approach to make any change to your phone system. With the right balance, your phone system can help reduce a major cost center for your organization, but it must be executed with care.



102 Timbertrace Ct.
Columbia, SC 29212
1-866-IDEACOM (433-2266)
www.ideacom.org