PRELIMINARY

☐ Evaluate your unique organizational needs

In order to determine which business phone service is best for you, you will want to ask yourself the following questions: How big is your organization? How many employees need to use the service? Do you need desk phones? Do you need VoIP conference phones?

☐ Decide between landlines, VoIP, or virtual phone services

Landline phones are expensive, but they are reliable and don't require a strong internet connection. VoIP services cost less and provide advanced features, but need a strong network. On the other hand, virtual services are very affordable but need an existing line to forward calls from.

☐ Prioritize the features you want

All business phone systems will be capable of making domestic calls. However, you will need to determine what features you require beyond that. For example, do you need business texting? Some systems, like Nextiva's Basic package, do not come with SMS capabilities. Other solutions provide features such as video conferencing and unlimited international calling.

☐ Consider other services you use

Many of today's leading phone services, such as RingCentral, offer the ability to connect data with outside business software, such as the Salesforce customer relationship management (CRM) platform. It is worth taking the time to take stock of your business software ecosystem and look up any integrated phone service that complements them.

☐ **Measure the strength of your network**

An internet-based phone system relies on a strong, reliable network connection. As such, you will need to make sure your office's network can handle a VoIP system. We recommend trying our speed test to determine the overall strength of your network.

Test the overall strength of your network   **Start**

Link 🔗   https://fitsmallbusiness.com/voip-speed-test/

☐ **Get quotes, demos, and other information**

The vast majority of business phone system providers have pricing information publicly available. However, there may be room for negotiation for new customers depending on the vendor and any applicable promotions. You can also ask for a hands-on demonstration of the service so that you can experience it for yourself before making a commitment.

☐ **Subscribe to a service**

Once you have chosen a service, you will have to go through the process of buying a subscription. Most vendors provide the option of subscribing on an annual or monthly basis. They each carry their own advantages and disadvantages. However, if you plan on using the system for a long time, an annual subscription can provide sizable long-term savings.

☐ **Purchase equipment (if applicable)**

If you want your employees to have desk phones, you will probably have to buy that equipment separately from your business phone service. In order to determine the right handset for your needs, you can check out our guide to the best VoIP phones on the market today.

☐ **Prepare to port numbers (if applicable)**

If you want to transfer an existing number to your new business phone system, you will need to port numbers. Each provider has a different way of doing this. You will either have to port the number yourself in the system's settings menu or have a customer service representative perform the port for you. Check with your provider for details.

DEPLOYMENT

☐ **Hook up any attached hardware (if applicable)**

If you bought VoIP phones, you can either plug them in via Ethernet cable or connect them to your Wi-Fi network. In most cases, you will be able to just connect the phones to your router and enjoy internet-based calls immediately.

☐ **Configure your business phone system settings**

You will need to configure your telephony settings through your service's settings menu. Here is where you will set up your automated attendant, assign extensions to staff, and even record your voicemail greeting. In some scenarios, you can also configure the business hours for your service so that off-hours calls are sent directly to voicemail.

☐ **Train staff**

Whenever you introduce a new solution into an office, it will take some time for staff to get used to the change. In order to get the most out of your business phone service, we recommend taking some time to train your employees on how to use the business phone system and its features.

☐ **Connect mobile apps (if applicable)**

Most internet-based phone systems offer some kind of mobile app so that you can make calls with your work number through an Android or iOS device. If you want to effectively make your business number portable, then you will need to download and connect these apps. Simply search for your provider in either platform's app stores and download the software. Then log in with your company's credentials. For more information, read our guide to business VoIP apps.