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## Selecting the right phone services for your business

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If your business has not reviewed its phone service providers in at least five years, you're probably missing out on packages that can save money and provide greater efficiency for your staff. The first decade of this century was one of upheaval for the telecommunications industry. For the most part, the business consumer was the big winner. High speed services, once the domain of only Fortune 500 companies, are now available and affordable for small and medium businesses as well. How can your business take advantage of this opportunity best? Read on and we'll give you our suggestions based on 40 years worth of collective experience.

### Understand What You're Buying and Why

Part of our role is helping businesses understand how telecom technologies work and what the latest telecommunications have to offer. The options are almost endless. Before shopping a new solution, consider these questions:

- are my current services still reliable and manageable?
- what does my business pay for service now?
- are there services available with lower taxes and fees?
- what type of service is best for my business size and scope?



***Saving Businesses  
Time, Money and  
Aggravation***

POTS services:  
Very reliable but  
antiquated and costly

### Reliable Services

POTS lines or, Plain Old Telephone Service, is the original. We're talking about the same copper line service Alexander Graham Bell developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It's reliable and it works with all phones, modems, faxes and security systems. However, there are several drawbacks. First, the technology is quickly becoming a thing of the past. Phone equipment is being designed for other technologies like IP phone service. Business POTS lines are also going up in cost every year. In fact, while other technologies become more affordable, POTS prices have increased every year since 2005 in the Chicago Market. POTS is also limited by the fact only one phone number can be assigned to each line.

[www.ramcomminc.com/telecom-101-pots.asp](http://www.ramcomminc.com/telecom-101-pots.asp)

T1 services:  
Easier to manage

### T1 Services

T1-based services, on the other hand, allow users to assign dozens even hundred of phone numbers to one circuit. For a growing business, T1 phone numbers can be much cheaper to buy and manage. T1 circuits are the standard technology for today's small business. T1 circuits provide the equivalent of 24 simultaneous voice calls. When compared to the cost of 24 POTS lines, T1 is a better value. As for its reliability, T1 is almost as steady as POTS lines. The key is ensuring your service is installed properly in a neighborhood where modern phone network is available. (Working with a consultant like RAM will ensure that these measures are taken into consideration.) From a support standpoint, service providers are all trained to support the T1 standard. This is comforting to know. Not all telecom technologies are supported as well as T1.

[www.ramcomminc.com/telecom-101-t1.asp](http://www.ramcomminc.com/telecom-101-t1.asp)

T1 is today's business  
standard

Types of T1 services

T1 circuits are also designed to work with most phone systems. There are many variations on T1 from PRI to integrated T1, to IP. Each variation provides unique features and benefits. IP-based circuits can seamlessly manage voice and Internet services together. This type of circuit can greatly reduce costs by eliminating the need for more bandwidth.



Take time to understand what your business needs

85% of purchasers polled don't understand what they're buying

#### Purchasing factors

#### Precautions

Like other business purchases, it's critical to have a basic understanding of how your current service is used. What do you like about the current service? What would you like to have that is lacking now? Without a basic understanding of your needs and wishes, it is too easy to become confused and overwhelmed once you invite a telecom rep in your door.

Consider this: there are over several hundred business phone companies in the marketplace today. The telecommunications industry is one of the largest industries in the United States. You will not have the time or desire to understand all the options (and pitfalls) available. Various surveys are conducted every year by telecom research firms. Every year, the business consumer results go something like this: 85% of purchasers don't fully understand what they're buying and most businesses only take advantage of 10% of the new technology purchased. Having a choice is great but only if you can manage and use the service for your full benefit.

So, which type of service works best for your business? To answer this question you must first understand your requirements. Here are just a few considerations.

- Does your business have 10 or more employees per location?
- Does your business spend more or less than \$750.00/month on phone service per location?
- Do you want to seamlessly transfer calls between offices?
- Does your staff generate more long distance calls than local?
- Do you want executives and management to have their own phone numbers?

The answers to these questions will help determine which services are appropriate for your business. Depending on your company needs, basic POTS lines may be the smart investment and in other cases, T1 telephony may be the smart choice. If you know your parameters, you're half way to making intelligent purchases for your business.

#### So where do I start?

Start with an informal survey of your staff and management teams. Collectively gather a list of requirements and desired improvements. Then, if possible, consult with fellow business owners. Can one of your peers recommend a professional telecommunications consultant? Look for a professional who is willing to work side by side with you from research to purchasing to implementation.

*For more information, contact RAM today at 847-358-0917.*

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