

# Assessing telecom needs

How to be in control of your telephony system **Interviewed by Troy Simpson**

**T**echnology is constantly changing and evolving, and if your business doesn't keep up, your competitors could quickly leave you in the dust.

This is especially true with telecommunication services and equipment. If you think the phone hasn't changed much in recent years, you need to reevaluate and assess your telecom needs.

"Telecommunications technologies and services are constantly changing and businesses should periodically evaluate these new systems and services to help make their companies more productive and efficient," says Monty Ferdowsi, the president of Broadcore.

Besides showing you how equipped (or not equipped) your telecommunications are for the future needs of business, a telecom assessment will show you where money can be saved — or gained.

*Smart Business* spoke with Ferdowsi about telecom assessments, the costs associated with them and how to conduct one at your organization.

## When and how often should businesses assess their telecom situations?

There are two distinct areas in which businesses should assess their telecom needs — telecom services and telecom equipment. In general, telecom services are the services provided by the telephone companies, including voice lines, voice usage and Internet access lines. Traditionally, businesses would evaluate their telecom services every couple of years. The focus of evaluation has, for the most part, reduced the cost of telecom services. However, in the last five years, the costs associated with telecom services have reached such a low point that there is little room for service providers to further reduce their costs.

On the telecom equipment side, in the last 10 years, equipment technology has gone through a considerable change. Infusion of IP (Internet Protocol) communications in the telecom space has led to the revolutionary VoIP (Voice over IP) technology. This technology has provided many capabilities that can have major positive effects on businesses, so much so that every business should evaluate and implement them. With all these changes in telecom services and



**Monty Ferdowsi**  
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equipment, businesses should assess their needs more often. I recommend an annual assessment to ensure that every business takes advantage of new productivity tools and services.

## Where should business owners begin when deciding to go forward with new telephony systems, processes or tools?

The best approach for businesses to assess their telecom needs is to not focus on cost savings alone. This approach will usually lead businesses to get the lowest-cost services, and that is not the most effective use of service and equipment technology. A comprehensive assessment of telecom services and equipment can lead to a sensible decision that leads to a total solution. Today, there is a completely new way of procuring all your telecom services and equipment called hosted telephony. Any company looking to assess its telecom situation should consider hosted telephony and compare it to the traditional methods of buying service and hardware from multiple sources. There are many benefits of acquiring full-service, business-class telecom services, including the fact that there will be one company providing all

the services, thus eliminating multiple vendors and complex decision-making.

## What areas of the business should be evaluated?

Businesses should consider productivity-enhancing capabilities for different parts of their businesses. Generally, businesses do not realize how some of the new features and functions of new systems can greatly enhance their work forces. There are many new features available today in the new telecom systems that can truly bring thousands of dollars of monthly productivity, providing very short-term ROI. New telecom systems provide advance mobility solutions that allow work forces to be away from the business, with associates and customers still available to be quickly and easily reached. VoIP technology also allows a business to maintain a skilled staff working from home, even if associates have to move far away from the office. There are many other features that can be equally effective, and each can potentially provide a business-changing effect to an organization. In assessing and evaluating your business's telecom situation, it is important to review your business needs and perform a full evaluation as a part of a telecom assessment project.

## How does cost factor in to the overall changes?

Cost should be one of the most important factors in an assessment; however, it should not be the only factor. The total cost of ownership is a good exercise to go through to evaluate what different solutions will ultimately cost the business the most. Considering a hosted telephony solution over the traditional way of acquiring telecom services and equipment presents a much lower initial capital expenditure as well as flat and predictable monthly costs that are usually 20 to 30 percent lower than the traditional model. <<

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