

6 Key Questions

Organizations Requiring Survivability, Mobility & Support

More and more today, particularly with the advent of smart phones and apps, we find that the typical worker is actually “working” in the office, in his/her car, at home, while shopping, pretty much wherever one goes.

As we leverage wireless technology, we also remain mindful of what can happen if there is an outage at our primary office location. What happens when the phone system breaks down, if a connection is lost, if our network has issues? With older technology (digital and analog), we relied on hardware – fixed assets with cards that chewed up physical cabinet and rack space, and fed hardwired devices. Our outside lines used T1’s, or analog POTs lines, also using critical real estate on printed circuit boards. When a line had a problem, or a card had a problem, one would dispatch a vendor, and have a repair call. When the T1 went down, or the phone CPU tanked, or the power was lost (all still occur with a lot of frequency), we were left without our ability to adequately communicate. Inbound calls rang no-answer, or were “busy”, auto attendants stopped answering calls, voice mail no longer worked as it was either part of the phone system, or relied on a PBX connection for its life. That was then... this is now.

When discussing the most important desires in new VoIP telephone system deployments today, we have several that are in most businesses’ “Top 6”. You might ask yourself:

1. Business Continuity: If I lose my carrier network connection, or in the case of a premise phone server being “down”, how will you ensure that calls are not lost? What options are available to continue call processing, allow staff to continue working?
2. Multi-Location Presence: If I travel between sites, or to/from home office, what am I able to do to enable seamless connectivity such that my calls can find me at a remote phone, or cell/smart phone – without changing numbers, without programming?

REDUNDANCY



3. Networking Transparency: In a multiple site configuration, or, in cases where I simply have remote workers, what is needed to ensure that extension numbering is common, that intercom features like voice announce intercom are available, so that user presence is visually available anywhere across the network, that call transfers, direct lines, forwards, voice mail, and unified messaging all work without special software, or programming, incremental servers?

4. Mobility: How do we accommodate users who also wish to pair a cell phone with their desk phone, or who may only have a smart phone? Can another user reach a smart phone via Intercom? Can I transfer from a fixed desk phone to a cell phone simply by use of an extension, or are special codes required? Can I get my voice mail messages into my Inbox and accessible using a .wav file player on my smart phone? In effect, what experience is available to unify one's communications?



5. Administration/"Self-Service": What type of GUI is available to make software moves and changes? Can I remotely log in to my system and make changes (i.e. re-routing traffic in a storm event to another location or to mobile users)? Can I run reports that show traffic and usage by extension, by date, by time, by telephone number, and other variables? What training is available to certify my ability to self-administer?



6. Vendor Service/Support: What type of coverage is available for break/fix? In a premise environment, are spares left on site? Where are technical staff coming from in case of site service calls? What type of emergency calling escalation plan is in place? What about training – are there extra charges upfront, during contract? Will the vendor charge for program changes initially, or during the term of contract? Who manages the carrier service element?

With Comtel, we have tried to pay close attention to our customers, and to their requirements. Certainly over our 24+ years in business, we have evolved, just like the market has changed. These key questions are asked repeatedly, by virtue of the shift in behaviors, but also clearly due to how we do business today. We remember the first days of voice mail systems where a few brave souls put their toes in the water to give it a "test". We recall voice mail becoming a repository for messages, as the concept of pink slip message pads went the way of the typewriter. Today, we really do work where we are, and our business and personal technology are tied at the hip. Our contacts have an expectation of instant access, and when our Internet connections are slower than normal, we wonder "what the heck is going on". Yes, things have changed.

So, what is Comtel's plan for the key situations that confront us – what types of options are available to our customers today in that relate to the **6 Key Questions** noted above?

- 1. COMTEL Business Continuity:** We offer premise based phone systems that may be designed with user resiliency – an auto failover to a secondary server (anywhere), so that a local CPU/Server failure does not impede one's communications. In the case of a hosted PBX, a failure at one location does not affect users at other locations, and, all inbound calls may be re-routed from an affected site, thus ensuring important client traffic can still reach its destination.
- 2. COMTEL Multi-Location Presence:** The nature of today's new technology lets a user work from anywhere – assuming he/she has the right system/device. Whether in a premise or hosted "world", we get your calls to your telephone, to your cell/smart phone, or to another VoIP device either within your office, or in another location.
- 3. COMTEL Networking/Transparency:** It should not matter where you are in your network. Whether you operate from one location, or 100 sites, all locations should be able to get calls to and fro without remembering special codes. We should only require one extension number, we should have the availability of presence information for users at other locations, and other common capabilities. A truly networked solution should feel like a unified community.
- 4. COMTEL Mobility:** Today, mobility is in everything we do. Our solutions make this a standard for anyone with a mailbox regardless of whether they have a physical phone on their desk. My smartphone is part and parcel of my overall communications experience today, and making this an integrated element of my user profile should be a simple accomplishment.
- 5. COMTEL Administration/Self-Service:** Our clients strive for better efficiency, and today most customers perform at least some self-service on their voice and data systems. It's more efficient for them, and lets them move with greater agility. Having access to reports, GUI portals for review and monitoring purposes are natural means to effecting improvements in overall management of the enterprise.
- 6. COMTEL Service/Support:** You can learn a lot by looking at a vendor's client list, and their programs. Comtel is proud to say that more than 20% of WNY businesses rely on us for their



ongoing support. We believe our growth is due to an honest commitment to listen, and act responsibly and with our client's interests paramount. It's why we offer 24x7x365 service. We provide free training and free remote programming for our contract customers as well.

Our sales team would be glad to discuss these 6 questions with you and make recommendations for the right solution for your organization. If you are not sure about a premise system or a hosted system, call us. If you need another set of eyes to review carrier bills, and make sense of lines, trunks, surcharges, and taxes, call us on that too. The Comtel team is able to help you with understanding all of your options. To speak with a representative, contact us at 716-874-5500, or send an email to sales@comtel.us.