

MANCHESTER COMMUNICATIONS

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AVAYA BUSINESS PARTNER



Power-up Your Business With the Right Communications System

Communications is the cornerstone of business. It helps drive sales, customer service and opportunities for growth. Small business need a communications system that delivers the power to improve customer satisfaction, increase employee productivity and gain competitive advantage.



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Small businesses are in a unique position: Their size helps them react quickly to customer demands and market conditions, and yet investments in business improvements may be either relegated to the “do it later” pile, or considered too financially daunting.

Take Pet Wow, for example. The family-owned veterinary care organization, located outside Cincinnati, Ohio, needed to consolidate its two new businesses into one communications system, but was worried about the financial commitment.

“At first we accommodated our two new businesses by adding two traditional phone systems, but that resulted in chaos,” says Shandon Stamper, Pet Wow co-owner.

“People were taking calls on three different phone systems for three different businesses, then struggling to track people down to take those calls. We needed to streamline our processes for our expanded practice [but] we thought sophisticated communications technologies were applicable only to Fortune 500 companies with mega budgets.”

Small businesses like Pet Wow are ideally positioned to thrive. However, they still face challenges

like limited access to credit, rising costs, and clients that expect more for less. These issues can affect their efforts to improve productivity, invest in new resources, improve customer service, and take advantage of growth opportunities.

One way small businesses can grow and thrive is by taking a good look at their communications system. It can have a significant impact on almost every aspect of business—customer service, overall operations, even how customers perceive their business. However, the type of system chosen is critical. The right solution, like Avaya IP Office, can help small businesses

find the time to accomplish everything they need to do: innovate, grow, gain competitive advantage, and make customers happier.

But what is the “right” communications system? Here are factors to consider:

- Is it flexible enough to fit your growing business model and the mobility of your employees?
- Will it fit into your budget?
- What if you don’t have an IT staff to install and maintain it?
- Will it help you attract and retain customers?
- Can it grow along with your business without significantly impacting your bottom line?

Getting a Jump on the Competition

Any small business owner will tell you they’ve got both eyes on the competition. It’s critical to stay ahead. Communications is a key ingredient to achieving competitive advantage, because if you miss a call you could miss a sale.



Like Pet Wow, most small businesses have to make the most of limited staff and resources, even as they expand. This forces them to improvise with existing systems and do more with less, which can open the door to missed opportunities. Add to that increasing healthcare insurance costs and other operating expenses, and there is a lot of pressure on already tight budgets.

That’s why, for many small businesses, investing in a new, more advanced communications system may not be on the priority list. And when it is on the list, it’s critical to understand how considerations such as functionality, cost and flexibility apply to and affect the business.

Then and Now: Technology Changes Communications

Starting with the functionality aspect, it’s important to note that many new communications systems have moved past the days of using analog phone lines. It used to be that communications meant telephone or fax calls to a land-based telephone line or calls routed through a single employee.

Today, many of the most powerful communications solutions are based on the same technology that fuels data transmitted over the Internet—Internet Protocol (IP). Often referred to as Voice over IP (VoIP), these systems digitize and



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transport voice in the same way as data, using the same infrastructure.

This convergence of voice and data makes communications more versatile and powerful. An IP-based communications system can help address the concerns of most small business owners—like cost and limited resources. For example,

IP systems eliminate the need for separate (and costly) voice and data services. And rather than an on-the-road employee missing calls, advanced features today enable automatic, seamless re-routing of calls to that individual no matter where she is, or what device she’s using.

IP Office makes it easy for customers and colleagues to reach each other. Calls flow through the network—helping reduce costs, eliminate variable phone expenses, and reduce real estate requirements.

Today’s Business Challenges

With all the benefits that an IP-based communications system provides, it’s no surprise that many

businesses are adopting the technology. However, it’s commonly the case that many business owners invest their own personal finances to nurture business growth. Not only do they need a satisfactory return, they have to consider how any investment impacts all the other elements of the business such as budget, staffing, and customer service.

Another challenge is not always having time for strategic planning and attention to anticipated demand for products or services. This causes companies to be reactive—for example, only addressing the need for a new solution when a significant event occurs, such as a move, additional sites coming online, or new demands from customers. But when you don’t plan ahead, you take the risk of impacts to the bottom line—by not innovating products or services for new sources of revenue, or by spending excessively to upgrade or support outdated systems.

Small businesses contend with a bevy of other challenges, too:

Keeping the Budget in Check

Containing and minimizing costs is a key goal for every business. And yet owners must examine whether their current mode of business is adding rather than lowering costs. For example, are you paying for separate voice and data lines, and big fees for long-distance, mobile and conference calls?

The Need to Multitask

Small businesses are typically lean, with many employees playing multiple roles. It could mean, for example, that the office manager is also answering customer service calls while updating employee schedules. Or the salesperson is answering calls from the road, but is unable to get to emails until he's back in the office.

Ensuring Customers are Satisfied

Most small businesses understand that the customer is king, and therefore, service is a priority. But if you have separate voice and data services, your employees risk missing calls when they're out of the office. And if you don't have a user-friendly communications

system that makes it easy for employees covering for absent colleagues, customers will quickly become frustrated while waiting to be redirected.

How to Get Ahead

A unified communications system helps overcome the challenges facing small businesses. It's not as daunting as it may sound. An IP-based communications solution automatically combines voice and data, and allows you to quickly add phone services for new staff, including remote or mobile employees or temporary staff. It enables you to centralize administrative functions and more easily adapt to changes in the market or customer behavior.

It also helps you keep costs in check. By using IP to combine voice, mobile, and data into a single system, an advanced communications solution lowers operational costs. You also have flexible options to lease or purchase equipment on a transactional basis. All this helps to create a predictable and manageable cash flow.



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Ensuring Customers are Satisfied



For example, Avaya IP Office helps provide direct cost savings:

- Installation and maintenance costs are low because many functions are performed easily in-house
- Ongoing support and additions of new lines are tailored for the small business
- Costs for long-distance and mobile calls can be reduced by routing calls—especially international calling—through the business communications system

You'll also see indirect cost savings in the ability to reallocate staff and balance workload across locations to accommodate spikes in demand.

To ease the burdens associated with the need to multitask, a unified communications system frees staff time to focus on what they know best: running the business. For example, with features like speed dialing, caller ID or the ability to locate a colleague by just looking on a screen, a business can make big productivity improvements.

Simple call handling automatically re-routes calls—a business-saver when a key employee is out or on the road. And with the automated attendant feature, you can customize and personalize the system to not only reduce call handling, but also improve the professionalism of customer interaction.

At the heart of it, an IP communications system helps make employees available to customers, vendors and colleagues anywhere, any time. This is a significant advantage for small businesses that can't afford to miss a call.

Customers only have to dial one number to reach a staff member, whether that person is in the office or off-site. And when an employee is unavailable, you can program IP Office to route the call to another individual for timely service.

An Agile System for Agile Businesses

In the end, the “right” communications system is one that addresses all the challenges a small business faces, while allowing for growth. Avaya IP Office offers a scalable platform with the services and support you need to improve productivity, manage change, and fundamentally reshape the way you do business today, while allowing you room to grow tomorrow.

“We add 300 customers to our practice every month, and that's huge in the veterinary field,” says Stamper at Pet Wow. “We also run our business with fewer people than

other practices doing much less volume. Communications are managed so smoothly now with IP Office. It's very efficient, and it helps us to create great customer satisfaction. Our Avaya phone system is important to our current success and our future planning.”

With built-in intelligence to simplify communications, IP Office provides functionality that lets you be the confident, agile, innovative and productive business you were meant to be.

Mobility Drives Growth

Pet Wow expanded its practice to include two new businesses—mobile veterinary unit services and pet grooming. They added a new phone line for each of the businesses, creating chaos in the office as people tried to manage three phone systems, deal with large call volumes, and still offer personal customer service. They also needed to find a way to integrate communications with the mobile veterinary units, and get rid of costly cell phones in the vans.

With Avaya IP Office, the company scaled up to include its new business lines by:

- Consolidating separate phone lines for three business units
- Equipping mobile units with enhanced IP-based communications
- Taking advantage of home-office stations for part-time workers with the ability to receive calls at home
- Being able to connect doctors and pet owners more easily with integrated messaging and email services

“We would not see the revenue we do now with the staff we have without Avaya IP Office,” says Ray Stamper, co-owner of Highland Heights Animal Hospital. “It translates into hard dollars in the amount we save on the staff that would be required to do all the processing the system does. It would take anywhere from five to eight additional people, so our savings translate into well over \$200,000 a year.”



Learn More

Avaya & MANCHESTER COMMUNICATIONS

can help you embrace valuable opportunities and improve your business results in the new age of collaboration. To learn more, visit

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About Avaya

Avaya is a global leader in business communications systems. The company provides unified communications, contact centers, data solutions and related services directly and through its channel partners to leading businesses and organizations around the world. Enterprises of all sizes depend on Avaya for state-of-the-art communications that improve efficiency, collaboration, customer service and competitiveness.

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03/11 • SME4720