



# Alternate Access Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 3

July—Sept. 2009

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### Holiday Closing

Alternate Access will be closed for the Labor Day holiday on September 7, 2009.

### Alternate Access Turns 16!

On June 9 Alternate Access celebrated 16 sweet years in business. Over the years, we are happy to have served hundreds of customers, providing phone systems, fax servers, IVR equipment and applications, call center accessories and other customized communications solutions.

More importantly, we appreciate the customer relationships our business has allowed us to develop. The most rewarding part of being a successful business owner is learning about other businesses and helping them gain a competitive edge via their communication systems.

With the celebration of our 16th year in business, we thank our customers, colleagues, friends and families for contributing to our success.

### Ease the Pain of an Office Move with VoIP

If your company has big changes on the horizon – such as moving to a new location – VoIP, and Alternate Access, can help. In fact, the ideal time to upgrade a phone system is prior to an office move. Why? There are several reasons.

Doing so provides staff ample time to become familiar with their new communication system. It also removes one of many changes and potential sources of disruption a business experiences during the course of their transition. Employees that are fully versed in their phone system capabilities can even maintain necessary communications during the move process. And, it gives you the opportunity to request a customized move plan from Alternate Access, which will further help ease those moving blues.

For a modest fee, one of our VoIP experts will assess your new site—both the layout of employee phones and the phone server storage area—and recommend ways to ensure the move of your phone system is seamless and cost-effective.

Our experts will check aspects such as cabling and layout of the server room to ensure that any upfit is done correctly and economically. We will also evaluate current long distance, fax communication and cell phone bills to determine any potential areas of cost savings. We will recommend ways to maintain your institutional memory, ensuring that customer data is maintained and protected when you move.

By design, our VoIP systems can be moved with minimal downtime. Having a move plan, created by one of our system engineers, will further minimize business interruption so that your business can be up and running – as quickly as possible. During these tough economic times, no business can afford long operational delays.

Once you make your move, Alternate Access can assist with any additional changes to your VoIP phone system to accommodate new employees, departmental reorganizations or other changes that impact phone communications. Our systems are PC-based, so much of the phone administration can be done easily by you or via remote access by our support team.

Our business is to get you back to the business of running your business as quickly as possible. For more information on setting up your move plan, contact us at 919-831-4260 or e-mail [support@AlternateAccess.com](mailto:support@AlternateAccess.com).

### If You Snooze You Lose: Auto Renewal of Phone Service Contracts



Many phone service contracts are set up to renew automatically. If you aren't assessing your contract regularly, your automatic renewal date could sneak up on you – making you miss the opportunity to switch to higher function, lower cost alternatives such as VoIP, which in most cases will save significantly on your monthly communication costs. If you are unsure whether your phone service contract is set up to renew automatically, review your contract and contact your provider. If you

would like to evaluate a VoIP solution, Alternate Access can develop an appropriate configuration and quote for your phone system and help identify the telephone service provider that will be most reliable and cost-effective for your business. We make the move to VoIP smooth, transparent and affordable.

As a fellow small business, Alternate Access understands how SMBs make major purchases. Any investment in the company is a big one – especially in these economic times – and each purchase must be evaluated and reevaluated to ensure that the company is getting the most bang for its buck.

We also understand, firsthand, how VoIP can help SMBs achieve that bang. So our marketing department recently posed this question to our sales staff: *What are the most common VoIP misconceptions you hear from potential customers?*

We were surprised to hear some of the VoIP myths people still believe and decided to go “MythBusters” style to debunk them and set the record straight. We’ll spill the beans right now and tell you that the key to ensuring none of these myths become reality for your company is to strategically plan your transition to VoIP with the guidance of an industry expert.

#### **Myth #1: The Quality of Calls Will Decrease**

It’s basic, but it cannot be overlooked. The quality of your calls is directly affected by the quality of your Internet service and the prioritization of voice in the traffic flow. Before VoIP is installed, your local and wide area networks must be professionally evaluated to eliminate the bottlenecks that introduce packet loss, jitter and latency that negatively affect voice quality. A small investment in equipment and router programming to support Quality of Service (QoS) yields a data network with fast and reliable internet access and excellent sound quality.

In addition VoIP offers newer, high-end telephone sets that support a technology called HD voice. The high definition uses a broader frequency spectrum and adds richness to the audio stream, providing for an enhanced communication experience.

New technology can be a part of your strategic plan. Many providers now offer a circuit where voice is prioritized over data and where the provider has control over the entire path from the customer through the internet to the endpoint. Also, there are an increasing number of products available for providing these controls at the border of the customer network to prioritize and secure the voice traffic – all of which come together to give you clear, stable call quality.

#### **Myth #2: A Traditional Phone System is Easier to Use**

We are all creatures of habit, and it is sometimes difficult to part with those things that make us comfortable – phone systems included. However, this myth couldn’t be further from the truth.

VoIP phone systems provide all of the creature comforts of a traditional phone system and make them accessible to a wider range of employees, who can use either the phone set or a graphical user interface to conduct most basic phone functions. Employees who are accustomed to software products such as Microsoft Office or Outlook will quickly realize similarities and enjoy the intuitive nature of VoIP phone systems. So whether you prefer to transfer a call by pressing keys on a phone set or by dragging and dropping a call via the desktop, VoIP can accommodate you. What could be easier than that?

#### **Myth #3: There Are More Security Issues with VoIP**

Data security remains a growing concern for all customers and VoIP is certainly part of that risk. In fact, it is important to treat your VoIP

system with the same security levels as the company’s servers and network. Part of the evolution of your data security strategy can be met with the same firewall components that provide QoS for VoIP resulting in both better performance and security.

In addition, VoIP and traditional phone systems share many of the same security threats, such as hackers accessing voice mail via weak passwords and the use of unrestricted call forwarding options. Allowing remote phones and satellite offices to share phone services from the main VoIP system can also pose a threat by opening your network to potential exposure. You can avoid these mishaps by using VoIP aware firewalls and gateways and VPN for access from remote sites as added security measures.

#### **Myth #4: The Cost to Upgrade Infrastructure Will Be Too Great and It’s Simply Not in Our Budget**

Because VoIP phone systems are “wired” as part of your Internet network, there is substantial savings in cabling and infrastructure cost at the outset of your implementation. Pre-planning your office upfit with your phone system in mind can maximize utility of your “phone closet” and save you from unnecessary headaches down the road.

Because VoIP systems often provide more people-friendly interfaces, self-administration is possible, saving both scheduling time and money for simple moves, adds and changes maintenance.

Ongoing phone costs can be reduced, particularly if long distance calling is a requirement of your business. In some cases, our customers have saved enough on their monthly phone bill to cover the cost of a new system and increase their cash flow.

The bottom line is that, of course, only you know your company’s bottom line. However, it is important to consider all of the factors and make sure you are knowledgeable about the competitive edge that VoIP offers SMBs.



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