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Holiday Closing

Alternate Access will be closed for Labor Day as follows:

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Minimize Relocation Stress: Install Your Phone System Before You Move

A company move is a frequent trigger for purchasing a new phone system. Businesses moving to a new location, expanding or contracting in size, or otherwise undergoing a substantial change can benefit from an updated communication infrastructure, and new equipment may be financed as part of the up-fit or move.



With the many advances in telephone communication over the last five years, it makes sense for all businesses to evaluate their communication infrastructure. Voice over IP has come into its own. No longer fragile and untested, it offers proven sound quality, system reliability and demonstrated cost savings during implementation and on an ongoing basis.

While it is common practice to implement a new phone system as part of a move, this approach is likely based on the false assumption that since things will be chaotic anyway, the additional change can't make the transition any worse.

This assumption could not be further from reality. In fact, businesses benefit greatly by planning and implementing a new communication infrastructure well in advance of their physical move. Doing so can help minimize chaos and downtime.

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Cell Phone and Texting Usage Way Up

Recently an Alternate Access employee learned about the first-ever novel written entirely in text messages. The novel, "ttyl (Talk to You Later)" by Lauren Myracle, went on to become a New York Times Best Seller. Only a mild user of text messaging, the employee found the entire thing to be silly.

That same employee also thought the hype surrounding smartphones was, well, just hype. That is, until she recently received a smartphone as a gift. Now a firm believer in the tiny piece of technology, this Alternate Access staffer has developed a healthy addiction to her phone, text messaging and all applications in between.



That got her to wondering, have cell phones and text messaging reached a saturation point in the U.S.? Just how many of us have cell phones? How many of us are texting frequently? How old is the average text user?

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(...Cell Phone and Texting continued)

A little Internet investigation – via the PC this time instead of the smartphone – revealed a few interesting statistics:

Cell Phone Usage

- According to The Wireless Association (CTIA), cell phones have penetrated 91% of the total U.S. population, with more than 285 million wireless subscriber connections.
- The July-December 2009 National Health Interview Survey indicated that one out of every four American homes (24.5%) had only wireless telephones during the last half of 2009. The survey also indicated that one out of every seven American homes (14.9%) had a landline yet received all or almost all calls on wireless telephones.
- A study by Knowledge Networks indicated that nearly 60% of mobile-phone users carry their cell phone with them “at all times” – including inside their home.
- A 2009 global consumer survey carried out by Tekelec found that 32% of respondents call friends or family “all the time” or “often” when making shopping decisions, a figure that jumps to 45% among those ages 18-34. Growing numbers of shoppers also use their cell phones to connect to coupons and find stores with the merchandise they want.
- Of the respondents in the Tekelec survey, nearly a third, across all age groups, indicated that their use of SMS would increase in 2010, and 80% thought SMS yielded a quicker response than e-mail or voice mail.



Texting

- According to a 2010 report issued by the Pew Research Center, 72% of cell phone users send or receive text messages.
- The same report indicated that nine in ten 18-29 year olds own a cell phone, and 95% of them send or receive text messages.
- In its December 2009 semi-annual survey, CTIA found that more than 822 billion text messages were sent and received on carriers’ networks during the last half of 2009, which amounted to almost 5 billion messages per day. Over the entire year, more than 1.5 trillion text messages were reported on carriers’ networks.
- The 2009 Tekelec survey also indicated that that SMS was becoming a prevalent communications tool amongst older adults. The survey found that 60% of adults over the age of 45 were just as likely to use SMS as they were to make voice calls from their mobile phones.



So, it may be time for all of us to grab a copy of “ttyl” and brush up on the language of instant messaging.

In the mean time, find out how you can take advantage of the rapidly growing usage of texting to market your business and improve customer service. Alternate Access makes this possible with our Courtesy Text™ product, a short message sender that keeps you in touch with your customers and prospects.

Reach Your Audience Swiftly and Directly with Courtesy Text

Communication is a critical part of any business relationship. Whether you need to communicate with staff, loyal customers, prospective buyers or members of an organization, wouldn’t it be great to reach them wherever they are at the precise moment you need to reach them?

Courtesy Text allows you do to just that. Send short, critical messages directly from your computer to your target audience via their cell phones – reaching their purses or hip pockets in a matter of seconds.

You can send messages to one, several or many people, and recipients can respond if needed. Responses are automatically logged or, with custom reports, can be tallied or stored directly into a CRM application.

“Your tax papers are ready to be signed. Your prescription is ready. Come to the special sale for loyalty customers today until 5 p.m. Your appointment is scheduled for Tuesday; please confirm.” Create an unlimited number of pre-defined messages to facilitate fast, low-cost communication. You can even merge text with information mined from a database to quickly create customized messages.

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(...Reduce Relocation Stress continued)

A Typical Move Scenario

Business as usual during a move means that movers will arrive at the old location to disassemble furniture, computers and other equipment; telephones will be disconnected; and items will be packed up and moved to the new location.

Before an IP based communication system is installed at the new location, your entire data network must be in place. A challenge is presented in that several critical steps must be realized simultaneously to ensure that all system functions – from the phone sets to the desktop call control applications – are working at the cutover time.

The phone system must have a static IP address and access to an Active Directory. Phone sets must have access to the LAN and DHCP. Workstations must have access to the IP PBX. Installers must have access to all running workstations and corresponding user passwords. The phone service must be in place. If even one of these items is delayed, the result could mean lost calls, interruption of business, chaos among departments and a general frustration that dampens the excitement of your company move.

To take advantage of your new communication applications, a focused employee training session must take place. Planners should ask themselves, “When, during the move, is our staff free to devote two hours of attention to learning about and practicing the capabilities of the new phone system?” If this question raises concern, then you have hit on another challenge of installing a phone system while moving – employees have to endure a learning curve with the new system while their offices are in disarray and the business needs to keep functioning.

Ensuring a Smooth Transition and Optimal Engagement of Staff

A solution to these challenges is to install the system before you move. IP PBX systems use a different cabling infrastructure than legacy digital phone systems because the LAN is used to connect the phones to the PBX. Internet data access is generally used to bring calls in from the outside world, so the old and new phone system can coexist for a period of time before a cutover takes place.

A strategic approach would include installing the new phone system on an existing data network in your current location, daisy chaining phones to computer workstations, installing related GUI applications on those workstations, and testing all the call flows, auto attendants prompts, queues and workgroups prior to your office move. This scenario also provides a better opportunity to train employees on the new

system before they are in the midst of move-chaos, ensuring a smoother transition when you do move.

During the actual move, if you make the phone system the last item you move, you can forward calls to cell phones until your new office is in place. Once all the other equipment has been moved, the phone system becomes just one more PC to move. It arrives in tact; phones are connected to active data ports and work immediately. Since your staff has already been trained, they are truly ready to hit the ground running at the new location.

Ultimately, the smoother transition means less downtime for employees, greater proficiency in call handling and minimal interruptions in customer service.

(...Courtesy Text continued)

Endless Possibilities

Courtesy Text offers a world of possibilities for streamlining communications. Different uses include:

- Changing a group or team meeting time or location
- Alerting employees of a building lockdown
- Informing a customer of a service/status update
- Relaying inclement weather updates
- Casting a vote or choosing between specific options
- Promoting special sales
- Implementing a customer loyalty program
- Confirming appointments



Implementation is Quick and Cost-effective

Alternate Access can get your Courtesy Text up and running quickly; and you will be amazed at the affordable entry price and fast return on your investment. Contact Alternate Access today to learn how other customers are using this tool and discuss how Courtesy Text can meet the custom needs of your business. Just call (919) 831-8288 or e-mail products@AlternateAccess.com.