



Today's fast paced business environment demands that small and medium-size companies work hard to stay competitive. One advantage smaller businesses have is their ability to react very quickly to changes in the marketplace and respond to their customers. The last thing a growing business usually asks itself is, "Will my telephone system support my communication requirements - today and tomorrow?" Successful future communications begins with the voice/data platform you select today.



Businesses that don't expect to stay small forever require a system that can grow with them. A building block approach allows for easy cost effective expansion. Buying only what is needed today keeps the system affordable.

Remember when computers and data communications were only for large companies? Today the computer is a fixture in many small businesses and an indispensable business tool. To meet and beat the competition, smaller businesses often drive technology and are willing to explore new methods to save time and money. The architecture of the telephone system must allow for future enhancements. Modularity and In-Skin applications are both required for future applications.

A Small-to-Medium Business (SMB) communications system should be a complete small business communication platform. This system may be a key telephone system or it may be a server-based all-in-one PBX system. Selecting a specific system requires a total evaluation of your business goals and future direction. Voice, data, Voice over IP (VoIP), voice mail and call centres are just a few things that need to be considered when selecting an SMB communications system.

Small businesses do not have the luxury of time or a telecom department to support their system. Businesses need to be self-sufficient and cannot turn their system off for adds, moves and changes. A telephone system must allow for on-line changes and maintenance and must get applications running without interrupting business.



An interface card that contains the application (in-skin) is more convenient than external equipment. In-Skin cards allow businesses to add functionality as they need it and be assured that the application was designed to work specifically for their telephone system. Examples of In-Skin cards include Voice Mail, Automatic Call Distribution, Conference Bridge and VoIP.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about SMB systems is that what is difficult to use will go unused. **Features are only as good as their ease of use.** The brains of the system are often hidden away but the telephone is used every day.

Telephones that are aesthetically pleasing and ergonomically designed lead to successful deployment of the applications of the system. A large adjustable LCD is useful for displaying caller ID information and other important system information. Softkeys guide users through features without the need to refer to a user guide.

The needs of businesses vary and that is why flexibility in a telephone system is so important. A business should never have to operate because of the way their telephone system operates. Matching the telephone system to unique business applications is the key to success.

