

Ina Stone & Associates Present...
Telecom Tips of the Month:

March 2009

How secure is your access into the internet? With VOIP or voice over internet protocol becoming more and more popular internal company information may be at risk. Just like identity theft for an individual, internal security for access firewalls is critical. Has your vendor suggested and made sure you have lock and key components in place? Testing is one way to make sure. If employees are calling in from the outside and can access voice mail, a line to call out on from the office, dialing in for computer access into the company network are three open doors. How safe are you from hackers? From competitors? From security breaches of any type? Knowing how a vendor verifies your security is a must.

February 2009

Relocating is currently on hold for many companies, however, for the few whose needs demand relocation in near months consider a few of the following ideas.

Begin with technology vendors a year in advance for new equipment decisions. Why, having a request for proposals in the unhurried time frame allows for better decision making and better testing, better equipment, more vendor selection and more accurately matching your company needs strategically.

This longer timeframe also demonstrates smart decisions for construction issues, planning variables and eventually sounder financial judgment. This also eliminates or lessens the risk of down time for a number of reasons.

Without going into the nitty gritty of telecommunication those not versed in the internal workings, orders can take months depending on location, regulatory issues, ownership and portability of numbers, just to name a few.

Relationships with vendors will be less strained and installation will be on time. I tell customers, in this industry if you want something messed up, hurry it up.

Do yourself, your company, your management a favor. Start in the very beginning just like the song says.

January 2009

So often when I make marketing calls, the response heard will be "our IT department handles that". Well, I have a question about having IT personnel programming telephones, yes. I want to throw out a few ideas for those who may want to think further into an organizations functionality. IT and telecom is a handshake, data does not move without an effective handshake between these two. IT is not a cure all for all technology functions.

IT personnel are needed, smart, tech savvy, great at programming and fixing computers, networks, problem shooting but they are not telecom personnel.

They may be able to program the PBX, understand a matrix of features and get the data flowing across the network but the questions below are to provoke thought. Does IT get involved with choosing vendors?

- Does IT handle strategic planning?
- Does IT write Request for Proposal for new products and services?
- Does IT understand the new marketing plan and how it impacts call patterns?
- Does IT understand customer (external) issues and what happens when customers get stuck in a voice response unit?

Obviously, this is a short list but you get the point, IT are so needed but please do not use the IT personnel for telecom.

December 2008

When buying new equipment ask to see the TRO for energy use.

The TRO is the technical reference to compare manufacturers' energy consumption during the vendor equipment evaluation/selection period. It will do a company little good to have saving from one area if energy consumption eats into the savings.

Also with VOIP or voice over internet protocol systems be aware that if the power goes down you are out of service. This of course can be remedied with power back up on all units. The power back up may add as much as \$500 per unit.

November 2008

RE: Toll free numbers on web sites

Those toll free numbers are important as business courtesy for customers because they can call you, customer service, and the order department on your dime, not theirs. However, so often, companies do not publish their local number on web sites. That means the company is paying toll charges on local calls from customers and vendors alike.

Make sure when publishing information on your company, all numbers are available, including the local number for those in your calling area. No one wants to pay for something that should be free, right? Which is what happens when a local call is made the toll (fee) is charged on the toll free number. Toll free means to the caller, your company is paying. The only time local calls are subject to charges are with something called measured service. Not the best type of service for heavy calling, in fact, not sure that measured service is even being marketed any more.

So when giving the internal or external web master the contact information make sure that includes all the local information, including the local telephone number with area code.