

## Needs Will Guide Communications



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“Every time a new person is hired, you call your telephone service provider and get a new line installed. You realize your telephone switchboard needs to be updated or replaced, but what do you buy?”

You own a small business that has been steadily growing for ten years. You have taken on new staff to keep up. Every time a new person is hired, you call your telephone service provider and get a new line installed. You realize your telephone switchboard needs to be updated or replaced, but what do you buy?

In order to get the best system for your business at the best price, you need to do a request for quote (RFQ). But you can't do the RFQ until you have carried out a needs analysis first.

Whether you do this yourself or get an independent consultant to do it, there are many questions to be answered, such as, the number of employees that require their own telephone extension, if telephones will be located away from desks, if you need area code routing, etc. Then there are office protocols that need to be identified, such as handling of incoming calls by an assistant, back-up procedure, auto attendant and zero dial option. Other requirements may include paging through telephone sets or overhead paging. Are internal conference calls from offices required? These are only a few of the considerations to be understood before issuing the RFQ.

Additionally, it can be very difficult to buy the most useful system if you are not aware of advances in technology.

Even after all the decisions have been made and the technology is understood, pricing has to be taken into consideration. Rather than get one price from one supplier, you should get quotes from a variety of sources. You can save as much as 50% using comparison-shopping, which would more than pay for the cost of hiring an independent agency to do everything for you.

In your RFQ, you need to ask your bidders to specify the amount of training they will provide after implementation. You also want to know what their guarantee provides, and for what period of time. It is also important to ask what guarantees they do not provide.

In the end, your telephone is a critical tool in the operation of your business. Make sure you apply the same diligence to an upgrade or a new system as you would for any other major purchase.

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