

ARE YOU READY TO BEAT THE RECESSION?

How many times in the past few months have you found yourself thinking of all the different ways you can trim office expenses? Because we cannot predict what the future holds lately with inflation, increasing gas prices, increase prices of office supplies, etc. we find ourselves trying to reduce trips to the store to conserve gas, checking out the prices of generic brand items on the shelves, and overall attempting to conserve resources too.

But before you look to cut all expenses across the board, you may need to get a professional to help you consider options that may not necessarily require you to cut quantity or quality of the services, but it might just require the implementation of a different service plan in the case of phone service for your office.

For instance, when reviewing telecommunications services you need to include monthly dial tone services, internet access, and phone equipment maintenance. When was the last time someone reviewed your phone bill(s)? Are you getting the discounts and credits you deserve? Do you have excess phone numbers you don't need, an underutilized long distance plan, or even the best price per long distance minute? If you are unsure of the answer to these questions and you do not have time to investigate yourself, consider getting a professional opinion from a consultant who specializes in the telecommunications area. They have a trained eye to find what savings opportunity your office will be looking for.

Think about it, telecommunications is to a business as air is to our bodies. Without telecommunications, your business simply could not thrive and grow. You and your customers need to be able to be in contact with each other and telecommunications allows a business to compete in this fast paced, ever changing economy. Considering the importance of telecommunications to a business, making additions, deletions, or any changes to the services can impact the function of the company greatly.

A good telecommunications consultant will spend time with the proper individuals of the business to determine the best needs of the services for that business. Some of the factors they consider include:

1. Are there adequate numbers of phone lines coming into the office? Are callers able to “get through” to the business easily or do they frequently experience busy signals or no answer at all?
2. Are there local toll charges associated with the particular service plan being used? Typically tolls can be applied based on the calling area surrounding the physical location of the office. Since these “areas” get redefined by the dial tone service company periodically, local tolls can be reduced or even eliminated depending on the newer plans available.
3. Does the (LAN) network have adequate speed or bandwidth for internet access? A telecommunications professional will consult directly with the IT department whether they be internal or externally provided (outsourced IT services) to get the information necessary to make a proper assessment. These days, being able to communicate electronically is becoming more prevalent and a necessity.
4. Long distance plans seems to be a good target for competitive companies to call potential customers and convince them that if they verbally agree to a particular “upgraded” plan, they will be saving money. This is not necessarily the case. It is interesting how they sometimes leave out information! Easily you can be talked into a lower price per minute but not be told of the monthly recurring charges you will have to face no matter how much long distance minutes you use. In the end you can be paying more for your new long distance plan that you were paying for the old one.

Professional telecommunications consultants can identify these and other intricate needs of a company and be able to objectively recommend changes that can enhance the productivity of the business without compromising the quality of the services needed to function daily.

When looking for a good consultant, make sure you consider the following before hiring one:

1. Get recommendation from other business owners if they have used a consultant. There's nothing like a good referral system to find quality people.
2. Meet the potential consultant face to face if possible. You can get a better feel for their professionalism if you can meet them personally.
3. When interviewing a consultant of course get references. Check to see how well they were able to save other clients on expenses. Of course years of direct experience in the telecommunications field is important too!
4. Most importantly, choose someone (not just a firm) that you can feel you can build a relationship with, earn your trust, and communicate with easily. How readily will they be available to answer your questions?

A good consultant-client relationship is so important when considering dealing with one of the most important aspects of your business – telecommunications.

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