Avoiding Day Two Regret: A Primer for Buyers of Business Phone Systems

Great things are happening in business communications — mobile apps and cloud computing are dramatically expanding our ability to collaborate around the clock and around the world.

Yet companies that hire resellers to implement these features in their offices often find something unexpected happens a few days after their systems go live: They can't figure out how to transfer calls, put people on hold, or do other basic tasks they took for granted in their old systems.

This inevitably leads to what we like to call, Day Two Regret, a nagging suspicion that they were better off with their old phone system. This costly brand of buyer's remorse is bad for buyers and sellers alike, so it's well worth learning how to avoid it.

If you're buying a new business phone system, avoiding Day Two Regret is imperative. Read on and we'll tell you how.

The Road to Day Two Regret

Shopping for a new phone system offers opportunities to gain more advanced features and services. The sales rep on the phone promises high-end, cloud-based features like chat, video conferencing and contact center capabilities on your desktop and any mobile device, enabling business communications from anywhere in the world. The demo is tantalizing and you're filled with excitement about all those new features that will make your team work better and faster.

So you purchase this great system and quickly complete the installation and internal training process. Of course there's grousing on Day One because people are usually resistant to change. At half-past noon on Day Two, however, you realize you haven't taken a call in three hours. Oh, right, you turned on the Do Not Disturb function in the new system's smartphone app before that big meeting, but you forgot to turn it off.

This didn't happen with your old phone system. It had a button on the phone that lit up to remind you DND was turned on. Your new phone system buries Do Not Disturb inside an app on your smartphone, but there's no light on your new desktop phone, so now you have to take the time to track down something that used to be at your fingertips. How much business did this three-hour communication gap cost you?

Welcome to Day Two Regret, the realization that your new phone system is not what you expected and you need it fixed before it starts impacting your business.

What Does Day Two Regret Look Like?

The surest symptom of Day Two Regret is the realization that your new phone system does not make it easy to use the most common features: buttons that perform required tasks. Often it looks like this:

• The desk phone is missing presence indicators. You have to call up the online dashboard to see these indicators.

• You no longer have speed-dial buttons for the people you call most, just complicated star codes to memorize.

• There's no Record button on the phone.

• There's no Do Not Disturb indicator on the phone.

• The web application and your devices are not always integrated for real-time interactions.

These omissions quickly cause dissatisfaction among workers forced to change their routines overnight. Unfortunately, these issues typically crop up only on the day the system is installed. A day later, the disappointment has spread.

Inevitably all this disrupts business practices, potentially costing you customers and critical relationships with vendors and suppliers. Furthermore, it leads to low adoption of the very features you installed the system to get.

Day Two Regret in Action: The Missing Hold Button

A dentist in business for 25 years had been won over by a pitch from a business phone reseller who said he specialized in dental offices.

But the day the new phones were installed, the receptionist immediately noticed she couldn't figure out when the dentist was on the phone. This is vital information when a patient in pain needs to talk to the dentist immediately. It's the simplest request you could imagine: Just give me a button telling me if my boss is on the phone. And this new desk phone didn't have it. Suddenly, the office had to change how it had been doing things for decades, an option that was not on the table.

The dentist called the reseller and demanded functionality the reseller simply could not provide. Eventually the dentist backed out of the contract and went with another provider who could install a system more like the one the practice had to begin with.
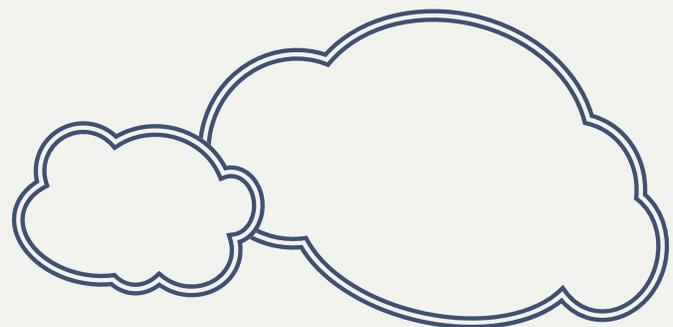
What Causes Day Two Regret?

With the rise of economical, cloud-based VoIP telephony and the explosion of mobile computing, the idea of pushing all of our fixed telephone features into our mobile computing devices seems very attractive.

Unfortunately, cost savings and mobility can sometimes come at the expense of functionality. Providers of business phone systems often find that up to two-thirds of their advanced multimedia functions never get used. Why does this keep happening?

Forgetting the value of simplicity. Sure, users want advanced features, but they still need desk phones that perform traditional communication functions. Most of the time it's more efficient to have a simple phone with buttons than a feature-laden dashboard in an app that's cumbersome to use.

Sales processes lack demos and follow-up. In years past, sales reps would visit a business and walk users through all the functions of their new phone system. More recently, however, sales have moved to more of a telemarketing approach, relying heavily on pitching features, so there's a lot less follow up to ensure people are buying the right systems for their needs.

Technical complexities take a toll. Some resellers simply deliver phones in boxes and tell customers they're on their own. It often turns out that setting up these phones is far more complex than the customer anticipated. The reseller, meanwhile, expects the buyer to be sophisticated enough to optimize the install and does not have a support structure in place to hold onto the client when Day Two Regret strikes.

Bandwidth needs rise exponentially. Companies are becoming much more interested in video conferencing, but they may not realize how much extra bandwidth they need to run live video feeds. So when they try to reel big clients in on a video conference but limited bandwidth turns the call into a communications disaster, they give up on video altogether.

Avoiding Day Two Regret: 5 Things You Can Do

1. Keep in mind what you need the system to do. Many sufferers of Day Two Regret find they neglected to ask the most basic questions about how their new phones will work. Before you buy, have the people whose jobs depend on your phone system document the functions they use every day. When you're negotiating your phone setup with a reseller, come with a checklist that includes all those vital features.

2. Buy from a trusted partner.
Sometimes a business owner will get a sales call from a telemarketer and decide that now's the time for a phone system upgrade and a cloud solution looks like the best bet. But that's not the way to connect with a reseller who truly understands your needs and wants to keep your business for the long haul.

You really need an experienced local reseller who can come to your office, learn your needs and develop a lasting professional relationship. A reseller who has earned your trust will go the extra mile to keep it. When shopping among multiple resellers, look for in-depth experience across a variety of industries. That suggests an ability to adapt to a host of complex install and ongoing support issues.

3. Get an in-person demonstration. Don't be fooled by flashy online demos. Make sure your reseller can show you the phones in person and demonstrate all of their functionality. Some resellers allow you to hook their systems up with any kind of phone. A multiple vendor approach adds complexity and reduces the level of real-time integration across the system and devices.

You want phones that integrate fully with the online apps driving the entire system. If a button lights up on your desk phone, there should be an equivalent function in all the desktop and mobile apps.

4. Confirm that your organization's infrastructure will support the new phone system. Another advantage of going with a trusted local reseller is you have someone with the technical expertise to ensure you've got a good Internet connection, robust routers and proper cabling. Video might require a substantial upgrade in network capacity. Video use on your network can mean voice quality is degraded if you don't have your network configured to optimize voice traffic.

5. Make sure support is readily available. Are your support calls handled close to home? Can your reseller send somebody to your site if something goes amiss? Does the desk phone provider have an online site with simple how-to videos explaining how the system and the phones work? All of these factors are essential to avoiding Day Two Regret.

Conclusion

At its core, Day Two Regret springs from a mismatch between what a company believes it needs in a phone system and what a service provider can provide at an attractive price.

Buyers need to identify vital communication tasks they've come to expect from their current phone systems, and they need to make sure their service provider can deliver each of those functions in an easy-to-use package that does not disrupt their business.

That has to happen from Day One. When every call matters, Day Two is a day late.

About ESI

At ESI, we rely exclusively on our channel. We aren't like those big, national providers that tout their hundreds of reseller partners but make over 50% of their revenue from direct sales.

We also understand the importance of a fair contract, one that allows our partners to make a good margin on what they sell. Take a look at what cloud solutions can do for your business and expand your opportunities to win.

ESI also understands the desktop, and we understand the end user. As a manufacturer, we have the ability to make sure that the systems work with the endpoint device, whether that device is a telephone on a desk or a mobile device in a pocket or bag.

Controlling both sides of the purchase, the infrastructure, application and the hardware, we're going to ensure that it is the easiest-to-use, most intuitive product available.

Estech Systems, Inc. (ESI) delivers high-performance phone systems and cloud services designed for businesses and organizations. A premier provider of cloud- and premises-based unified communications solutions, ESI offers uniquely innovative and integrated systems that enable its channel partners to deliver differentiated, intuitive, and affordable VoIP communications. Founded in 1987, ESI has sold more than 300,000 business communications systems through hundreds of certified Resellers. ESI is a privately held corporation with headquarters in Plano, Texas. For more information about ESI and its products, visit www.esi-estech.com.