



Business phone systems are multi-line telephone services that allow employees to communicate both internally and externally. Typically, these systems are meant for businesses of varying sizes that experience a large volume of calls, and thus may require integration between multiple devices to assist in managing the load.

Depending on the size of the business, and the industry, these systems can be customized to fit a particular company's needs. Oftentimes, these customizations are treated as premium features, and affect the resulting cost. To that end, there are six important business phone features worth knowing about.

- CTI
- IVR
- Conference Calling
- Online Fax
- Voicemail to Text
- Auto Attendant

## 1. CTI

Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) is a business phone system feature that allows for joint-coordination between a company's telephone and computer systems. In practice, CTI is divided between desktop functions and server functions. Desktop functions, which are more common, can include automatic dialing and phone control. These may also be known as first-party

call control. Server functions, also known as third-party call control, can be used for automatic call routing and voice recording. Regardless of type, CTI features are typical for large corporations that experience a high volume of calls. Realistically, these may manifest as call centers, or as the customer service departments of larger companies.

## **2. IVR**

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is a business phone system feature that allows for interaction between a computer and its user through the combination of voice and keypad selection. Regardless of desired use, IVR systems use voice recognition software to identify key dialogue phrases, which will then dictate function. Commonly used as a supporting infrastructure, IVR systems are often the first point of contact with callers, ensuring that they are properly routed to the correct department or recipient. IVR can also be applied in the context of telephone banking, mass surveys, information gathering, and order entry.

In the context of call routing and banking, IVR is ideal for larger businesses who experience a large number of calls, especially those who find that the hiring of traditional operators would be less than efficient. For smaller businesses, IVR can be great for callers who wish to input orders or gather simple information, thus saving the company time and expense.

## **3. Conference Calling**

Conference calling is a business phone system feature that allows for multiple people to engage in a single phone call simultaneously. While basic conference calling is often free, premium features can be added for a fee. Depending on the specifics, for instance, conference calling can be customized to allow for audio-only participants, as well as PIN security.

Other premium features can include sub-conferencing, Q&A facilitation, transcription services, automatic audio recording, moderator codes, and desktop-based call management. Conference calling is great for businesses of any size. By transcending the traditional one-to-one call system, it facilitates

communication between any number of people across any amount of distance. Thusly, this can increase any given company's potential for growth.



## 4. Online Fax

Online faxing, also known as internet faxing, is a business phone system feature that uses internet servers to send an image of a document. This is in contrast to traditional faxing systems, which operate via telephone networks. While fax machines were once needed, online faxes can be both sent and received by way of smartphones, tablets, or any other device with an internet connection.

While online faxes have no technical advantage over emails and scans, they are commonly needed when a person's handwritten signature is necessary. In addition to basic online faxing, VoIP faxing can be included as a premium, which allows for the faxing of dictated documents. Internet faxing can function

equally well for large and small businesses, both of which will likely need to send documents.

## **5. Voicemail to Text**

Voicemail to text is a business phone system feature that transcribes voice messages into text messages. This process is typically performed through voice recognition software, which also ensures privacy of the user's data. Depending on the length of the message in question, the software may have a cap on the extent of transcription. This can be circumvented, however, as certain companies may also offer human assisted transcription for a fee.

Regardless of how the voicemail is transcribed, the text format allows users to quickly scan for salient details, without the need to take notes. This is great for workers who are pressed for time. Regardless of whether a business is large or small, the voicemail to text feature can save valuable time, as well as contribute to a rise in efficiency.

## **6. Auto Attendant**

An automated attendant, also known as an auto-attendant, is a business phone system feature that acts as a digital receptionist. Manifesting as a voice menu system, auto-attendants assist callers in transferring to their desired extension. Automated attendants are best for large businesses that would ordinarily require phone operators to direct a large volume of incoming calls.

In the event that these features have provided context towards your purchase decisions, it's time to begin examine specific companies. For a breakdown of options and comparisons, our list of the [top business phone systems](#) would be a great starting point.