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HOW TO SELECT A TELECOMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS PROVIDER

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SANTA FE/ALBUQUERQUE, NM — October 30, 2008 — Today's business environment has never been more competitive. Companies in virtually every industry are working overtime to increase profits and outperform the competition. To aid them in their efforts, they are looking at a variety of ways to enable their employees to increase customer service. One such way is to take advantage of the quantum leaps in technology being offered by today's telecommunications systems.

Ignoring your company's rapidly becoming obsolete telecommunications system can mean lost revenue and wasted time for your staff and employers. It is imperative that your company make every effort to control costs and increase productivity. And a state-of-the-art telecommunications system, over the long-term, can pay for itself.

One thing to remember — a telecommunications system is a major investment that should be able to grow with the company. Furthermore, your system should be purchased from a reputable provider who will consult with you to select the right system for your company, install the system, provide training and long-term assistance with any problems and install future system upgrades.

The following is a list of considerations to take to heart when selecting a telecommunications systems provider:

• **Manufacturer Authorized or Accredited.** Is the telecommunications provider authorized or accredited by the system's manufacturer? Beware of providers that say they are authorized by the manufacturer, and are not. The firm may be able to install the system, but will not be able to provide the ongoing support, including upgrades to the system and correcting any software problems. Because the provider does not have access to the manufacturer for the resolution of these problems, it places you, the customer, at a high risk. To determine if the provider is authorized or accredited, start by asking for a comfort letter from the manufacturer or call to the manufacturer's regional office for a provider reference. It is also a good idea to visit the vendor's office to take a look at the inventory, facility and day-to-day business operations.

• **Voice and Data Experience.** In today's rapidly evolving telecommunications marketplace, you will need to select a provider that has a significant amount of both voice and data experience. This is critically important, because the convergence of voice and data has happened. Your company needs to work with a provider that has the technical expertise in computer telephony integration (CTI).

• **Full-Service Telecom Provider.** The company should provide a single point of contact for consultation, design, installation, implementation, training and maintenance of voice, data and video communications cabling and equipment. A wide range of top-quality, reasonably priced products and services should also be available to you. Is the provider simply going to sell you a piece of equipment, or provide your company with a solution with an application orientation to it?

• **Provider Reputation.** The provider's reputation is as significant as the product you buy. In addition to checking with other business associates about the companies and systems they selected, check with the Better Business Bureau for references. You should ask the provider for a least five customer referrals. Then call each one of those referrals. Ask how long have you had the system? How is the providers' ongoing support? Has the company demonstrated an ability to resolve any problems as they arose?

• **Understanding Of Your Business.** Does the company have an understanding of your business? Are they able to translate that understanding into adapting the technology to most benefit your company? For example, a mortgage banking firm is going to have a different system application from a manufacturing company. You need to select a provider that has a full-scope of business knowledge and understanding.

• **Entrepreneurial Approach**. In today's business environment you need to select a provider that brings an entrepreneurial approach to conducting business. The most significant aspect of a telecommunications system purchase decision is that a dynamic partnership will be formed between your company and the provider. Therefore, it is vital that the two understand each other and that the provider be responsive, flexible and competent to effectively handle your needs. Many large telecom providers

have not adapted quickly to technology changes in the marketplace, and have limited local support if you have a problem with the your system. In addition, entrepreneurial providers empower their customers with new systems and features needed today, ahead of expectations, then show them how these can be applied in their business.

• **Purchase Options.** Does the provider offer you options of leasing, financing or buying the new system? Even with the demise of the investment tax credit, there are still plenty of good reasons to lease equipment. The financial records related to your current system can be used as a reference point. You will need to factor in the initial cost of the system, potential enhancements and repair costs.

• **System Warranty.** What type of warranty does the company offer? It is critical that you understand your warranty options and determine whether they cover parts and labor which provides large and small businesses with a combination of security, comfort, value, dependability and peace of mind.

• **Remote System Access.** Make sure you are given the option for remote system access. Remote access enables your provider to make adds, moves or changes to your telecom system from off-site. This feature can reduce costs over the long-term.

• **Local Support and Service.** Does the telecom system provider have a local technical assistance center staffed by highly-trained, certified technicians? Will the company come back to your business after time has passed, assess what has changed, and make recommendations to improve your system? Your previous telecom provider may have recommended a technology that was great for your business five years ago, but the environment has changed, there are better solutions today, and there will be tomorrow.

• **Customer Employee Certification.** To some providers the less the customer knows, the better. Reality is the more you know about your system, the better off you will be over the long-term. Will your telecom provider send your designated employees to a certification school for training on the system? Once they have been trained, they can have access to your system switch to do add, moves and changes. This will enable you to control service costs and enhance flexibility. In addition, a trained employee will be able to "talk the talk" with a certified technician if a problem ever arises.

Remember that you are shopping for a solution, not a product. Many companies make the mistake of simply buying the equipment rather than solving their telecom problems. It is important that the provider you select performs an audit of your existing system and either design a totally new system or integrate more efficient equipment into the current system.

The technology must, first of all, increase your profitability and, secondly, give your company a competitive advantage. The bottom line is to save money with cost-effective ways to improve the communications capabilities of your company.

ABOUT SPECTRUM COMMUNICATIONS

Founded in 1985, Spectrum Communications is a locally owned, full-service technology company servicing New Mexico with offices in Santa Fe (505) 474-4100 and Albuquerque (505) 888-6464. As technology marches on, digital voice and data networks have “converged” into integrated computer/telecommunications systems that offer many advantages versus traditional analog telephone systems. By employing these latest technological advances, businesses will help to ensure their success – improving their productivity and increasing their “bottom line”. Spectrum Communications evaluates the communications needs of its customers/partners and implements customized state-of-the-art technology solutions. Through emerging technology we help our clients gain a competitive edge and increase their revenues.

To implement these solutions, Spectrum Communications employs staff who are licensed and certified and are experienced in the installation and repair of low-voltage cabling, traditional telephone and voice mail systems. Spectrum holds a New Mexico Contractor license and is insured and bonded. Spectrum is a Microsoft Partner and a certified dealer for ShoreTel (pure VOIP solutions), NEC (converged solutions) and Vodavi (traditional), offering communications systems that can accommodate large VoIP solutions with multiple sites. Customers are thoroughly trained in every component of their system by Spectrum Communications highly experienced customer service team.

The company’s local dispatch center delivers round-the clock service to ensure system reliability. Spectrum Communications also offers comprehensive service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and emergency service guaranteed within 2 hours.

For more information on Spectrum Communications, call (505) 474-4100 or visit www.spectrum-nm.com.