



2019

Quick Take

- Phone coverage is not sexy but is essential.
- Call paths and coverage can be problematic for SMBs.
- Coverage is typically more than 40 hours a week.
- Evaluate the cost of a professional response to the criticalness of the call.

Considerations

Use a combination of features and technology to sculpture your coverage of your company's land line.

Consider who will use the main number and put a person with the skills and knowledge to answer such calls.

DIDs can be very effective in reducing the unnecessary calls on the

Covering the Landline

Although it is a technology that was developed over 100 years ago, a much underrated aspect of the communication umbrella is the coverage of the main number of the business. Many instances a business will establish itself with a main or toll free number yet man this number with the lowest paid position in the company. Yes, many business leads come from the web or social media but many consumers and customers prefer to call and talk with the company. Coverage of the main number is a very important aspect to the communication umbrella of a company.

Many companies have incorporated an integrated voice response(IVr) to address the incoming traffic on the main number. Depending on the critical nature of this method of customer communication, IVRs can be very useful. But if a customer needs to talk to someone, an IVR can become very frustrating. If your company needs to talk to customers via the main number, you must have an easy to access method in an IVR to speak to someone—no voicemail jail!

To address spam calls, a brief

IVR message on the incoming call is advised. So if you want a real person to answer the phone, just put a brief message of indentification on the main number before going to the operator or the IVR menu.

Direct inward dial (DID) is another method to make the main number more for customers and less for vendors and associates. To keep the unnecessary traffic off the main number, ensure that employees and more importantly buyers have a separate, advertised number that rings their desk immediately. This directs all the non-customer traffic off the main number over to the direct individual who is fielding the call.

The covering of the main number has several aspects that are overlooked or mismanaged. Although the calls that come over that line or number are not all customers, the need to have an informed, polite person to answer the call is very important. Customers want answers when they call so an informed individual is very important to be on the other end of such a call. The position is typically considered

and entry level job but being the company's voice to the public such traditional attitudes to that position should be re-evaluated. An experienced, informed employee who is compensated accordingly should be covering the company's main number.

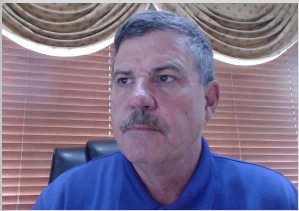
The business hours are typically longer than an eight hour shift. So to keep the main number covered, techniques or additional personnel will be required to cover the phone calls effectively. If the business runs from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM or six or seven days a week, coverage is well beyond the standard forty hour coverage of an employee.

The electronic leash is yet another aspect that is overlooked concerning the coverage of the main number. Breaks, other activities, or simple distractions at the work desk can result in calls not being handled in a professional and prompt fashion. Provide the technology and procedures to ensure that full coverage is available during business hours.

Putting your phone number "out there" is a commitment that should not be imple-

mented without some design. The use of DIDs, IVR, cordless ear pieces, data base of FAQs, DRM and other supporting tools should be considered before implementing a 800 number or a main line.

An older type of method to connect to your customers yet still a challenge for many companies.



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