



A Buyer's Checklist for Modern Business Phone Systems

Practical advice for UK businesses choosing a cloud phone system



Every missed business call is a **missed opportunity.**

Whether you're a sole trader juggling enquiries, or a growing team managing customer calls across multiple sites, the right cloud phone system helps you answer faster, route callers to the right person, and stay reachable wherever work happens.

This guide cuts through the technical jargon. Instead of listing every telephony feature, it explains which capabilities solve real business problems, including a practical checklist you can use when comparing providers.



The Cost of Missed Calls

Research consistently shows that a large proportion of unanswered calls don't result in a callback. Callers simply move on to a competitor. For service businesses, tradespeople, clinics, and retailers, this represents lost revenue that is entirely preventable.

A cloud phone system addresses this in three ways:

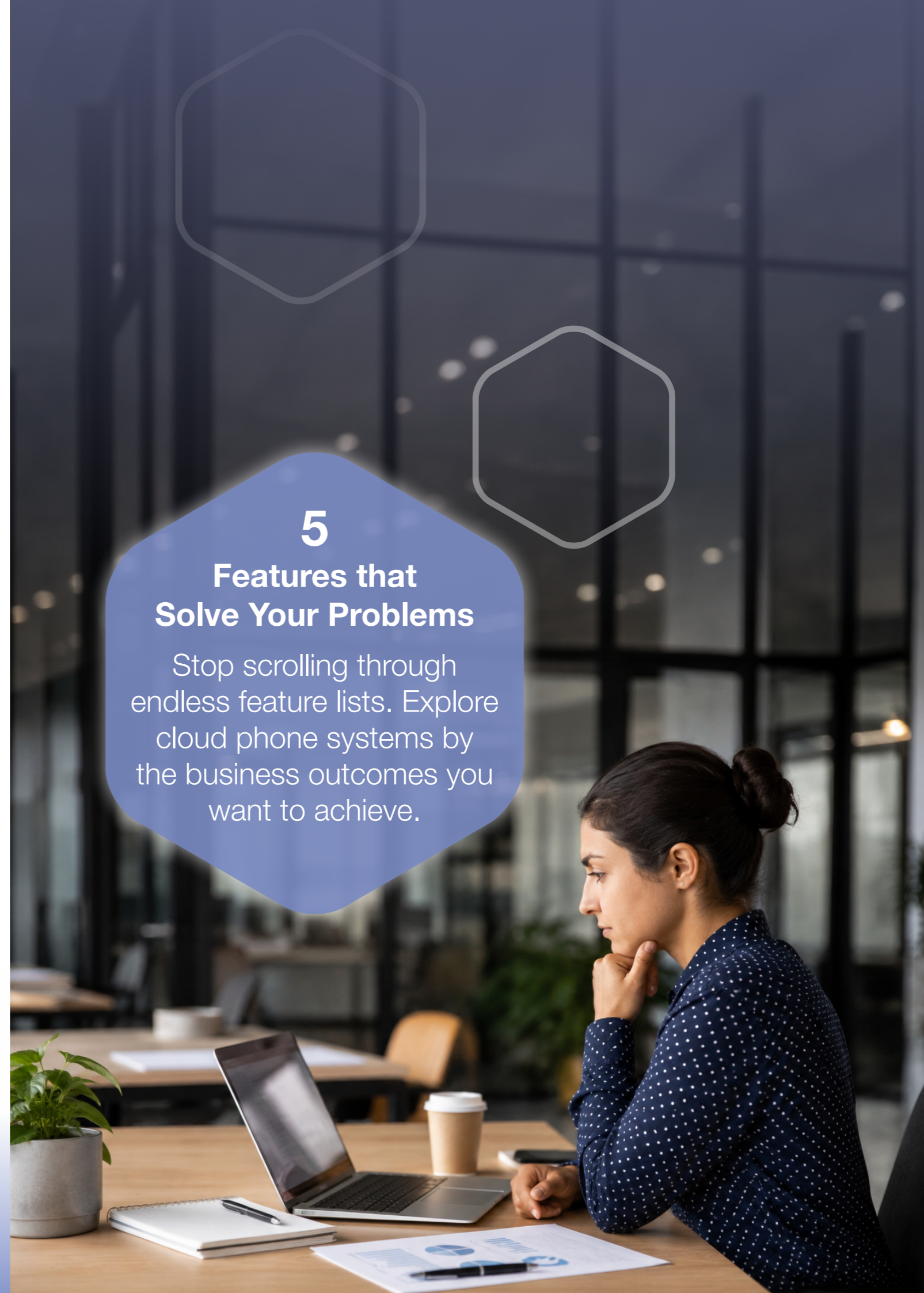
- Intelligent call routing ensures calls reach the right person or team immediately.
- Backup options, such as voicemail to email and call forwarding to mobile, catch calls when no one is available.
- Reporting tools give managers visibility over how quickly calls are being answered and how many are being missed.

Key question to ask any provider:

What happens to a call if every member of staff is busy or unavailable?
The answer reveals how well the system protects you from missed enquiries.

5 Features that Solve Your Problems

Stop scrolling through endless feature lists. Explore cloud phone systems by the business outcomes you want to achieve.





First Impressions and Professional Call Handling

Small businesses often worry about sounding smaller than they are. The right features create a polished, professional experience from the very first ring.

Business Need	Features to Look For
Professional greeting	Call greeting, IVR (Interactive Voice Response)
Smart call routing	Call Queue, Time-based Call Routing, Group Timeout Action
Department menus	IVR with multiple options

An auto attendant greets callers with a professional message and presents options such as “Press 1 for Sales, Press 2 for Accounts.” This creates the impression of a well-organised business, even for teams of two or three people.



Never Miss a Call

The features below work together to ensure that every call has somewhere to go, even outside office hours or when all lines are busy.

Business Need	Features to Look For
Stay reachable on the move	Call Forward to Mobile, Multiple Ring Strategy
Capture out-of-hours enquiries	Voicemail to Email, Group Voicemail Box
Alert staff to missed calls	Missed Call Email Notification
Failsafe routing	Call Backup

Voicemail to email is particularly valuable for busy teams. Rather than dialling into a voicemail box, staff receive an email with the audio file attached and can listen at their desk or on their phone. Missed call email notifications mean a sales team member can follow up within minutes rather than discovering a missed call hours later.



Helping Teams Answer Faster

These features improve collaboration and speed up internal communication, particularly useful for hybrid and multi-site teams.

Business Need	Features to Look For
Ring multiple staff at once	Call Group, Multiple Ring Strategy
Pick up a colleague's call	Call Pickup
Share customer information	Shared Contacts, Caller ID Screen Pop
Quick internal calls	Extensions, Speed Dial
Multi-person calls	Call Conferencing Room
Fast dialling from a computer	Click to Call, Desktop Notification

Call groups allow multiple team members to ring simultaneously when a call comes in. The first person to answer takes the call. This dramatically reduces the chance of a call going unanswered and is one of the most requested features for small customer service teams.



Giving Managers Visibility and Control

Without data, it is impossible to know whether your team is handling calls well. These features give managers the insight they need to maintain service standards and identify problems early.

Business Need	Features to Look For
Review call quality	Call Recording, Live Call Monitoring
Track team performance	Agent Reporting, Call Queue Reporting
Spot trends over time	Call Analytics, Call Logs, Call Tracking
Real-time oversight	Wallboard, Live Call Monitoring
Regular updates	Daily / Weekly Email Report

A wallboard displays live call statistics on a screen in the office, showing how many calls are queuing, how long people have been waiting, and which agents are available. This simple feature can transform how a small contact team manages peak periods.



Supporting Day-to-Day Users

These features improve the everyday experience for staff handling calls throughout the working day.

Business Need	Features to Look For
Manage availability	Do Not Disturb (DND), Wrap-Up Time
Handle multiple calls	Parallel Calls, Call Waiting
Personalised experience	Individual Voicemail, Speed Dial
Secure and easy login	Single Sign On (SSO)
Annotate calls	Call Tags, Call Notes
Text communication	Business Text Messaging



Your Buyer's Checklist

Compare cloud phone systems from different providers while asking the right questions.

Call Routing and Availability

- Can calls be routed automatically by department, team, or time of day?
- What happens to a call outside office hours? Does it divert to voicemail, a mobile, or a recorded message?
- Can staff answer business calls on their mobile when away from their desk?
- Can multiple staff ring at the same time so the first available person answers?

Missed Calls and Voicemail

- Are missed calls flagged by email, so no enquiry goes unnoticed?
- Are voicemail messages delivered to email inboxes as audio files?
- Is there a group voicemail box for shared inboxes such as a general enquiries number?

Team Collaboration

- Can staff pick up a colleague's ringing phone from their own handset?
- Are shared contacts available so all staff see the same caller information?
- Is call conferencing included without needing a separate service?
- Are internal extensions included so staff can transfer calls quickly?

Management and Reporting

- Can managers access call recordings for quality monitoring and training?
- Are call analytics and queue reports available, ideally in a dashboard?
- Is there a live wallboard or real-time view of call activity?
- Can automated daily or weekly reports be sent by email?

Mobility and Hybrid Working

- Does the system work fully on mobile devices as well as desk phones and computers?
- Is there a desktop or softphone app for staff who work from home?
- Can the same number ring a desk phone, mobile, and computer simultaneously?

Ease of Administration

- Is the admin portal straightforward enough for a non-technical manager to use?
- Can call routing and greetings be updated quickly without calling a helpdesk?
- Is single sign on (SSO) available for businesses using Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace?

Questions to Ask Before You Sign

Beyond the feature checklist, the following questions will help you assess whether a provider is the right long-term partner for your business.

- What is the minimum contract length, and what are the exit terms?
- Is UK-based technical support included, and what are the hours of cover?
- How is the system set up? Can you do it yourself, or is an engineer required?
- What happens to your numbers if you move to a different provider?
- Is the platform hosted in the UK, and how is data security managed?
- Are software updates and new features included in the monthly price?
- What hardware is compatible, and does the provider supply handsets if required?

Number porting:

When switching provider, you have the right to keep your existing phone numbers. Confirm that the provider supports number porting and ask for an estimated timescale before committing.



The 11 Features That Matter Most

If you are comparing two providers and want to focus on the capabilities with the greatest impact on day-to-day performance, prioritise these eleven features above all others.

#	Feature	Why It Matters
1	Auto Attendant / Call Greeting	Creates an immediate professional impression and routes callers without needing a receptionist.
2	Call Forward to Mobile	Keeps staff reachable on any device so calls are never missed simply because someone is away from their desk.
3	Call Recording	Supports quality monitoring, staff training, and dispute resolution.
4	IVR (Interactive Voice Response)	Lets callers self-select the right department, reducing transfers and handling time.
5	Voicemail to Email	Delivers voice messages directly to inboxes so they are acted on quickly.
6	Call Queue	Manages busy periods professionally so callers hear a message rather than a dead tone.
7	Call Group	Rings multiple staff simultaneously, dramatically reducing the chance of a missed call.
8	Call Analytics	Provides data on call volumes, handling times, and patterns to drive informed decisions.
9	Call Queue Reporting	Shows how long callers are waiting and how many abandon the queue before answering.
10	Live Call Monitoring	Allows managers to listen in to calls for real-time coaching and quality assurance.
11	Wallboard	Displays live call data on a screen so teams can self-manage during busy periods.

Useful Extras Worth Knowing About

The features below aren't deal-breakers, but they improve the day-to-day experience for staff and customers once the core system is in place. Look for providers that include these as standard rather than charging for them as add-ons.

Feature	What It Does
Caller ID Screen Pop	Displays caller information on screen before the call is answered.
Call Waiting	Alerts staff to an incoming call while they are already on a call.
Do Not Disturb (DND)	Lets staff block calls temporarily when they need uninterrupted focus time.
Speed Dial	One-touch dialling for frequently called numbers saves time throughout the day.
Wrap-Up Time	Gives agents a set period after each call to update records before the next call arrives.
Call Tags and Call Notes	Allows staff to label or annotate calls for follow-up or reporting purposes.
Ring on Speaker / Announcement	Broadcasts incoming calls over an office speaker so anyone nearby can answer.
Single Sign On (SSO)	Allows staff to log in using existing Microsoft 365 or Google credentials.

Ready to compare providers?

Use the checklist in Section 3 as your starting point. A good cloud phone system provider will be happy to walk through every item with you before you commit.

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