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Toll-free Phone Service for Small Business & Mobile Workforces

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CUSTOM TOLL-FREE PHONE SERVICE FOR SMALL BUSINESS & MOBILE WORKFORCES

THE BUSINESS PROBLEM

Five mental health practitioners share two office spaces at either end of town. The group needs to share one phone number, use extensions, keep voicemails addressed to each practitioner private and minimize costs. Paying for five separate landline phones each month is expensive and those telephone lines are restricted to one geographic location. This presents a problem as there are times when no practitioners are in either office.

Ideally, phone calls to the group's toll-free number will be routed seamlessly to each practitioner's cell phone, without the caller's knowledge or intervention. Additionally, the group would like to receive faxes via email, and save the cost of buying and operating a paper fax machine.

As the practice grows and business needs change, the group would like the ability to easily adapt their phone service in support of business goals; adding new extensions, providing local phone numbers in new service areas and **changing call routing needs to be simple and take effect immediately.**

Should the group experience problems with telemarketing or unwanted annoyance calls, they should be able to easily block specific phone numbers from calling in.

WHAT DID NOT WORK

Initially, the group practice ordered and used a local, landline-based telephone number provided by their phone company. Several problems quickly became apparent:

- **High monthly expense:** Before any of the practitioners made or received any calls, the phone line cost was nearly \$30 per month. Many clients were outside the local calling area and enumerating long distance costs each month and for each member was tedious. Activation fees added additional burden.
- **Voicemail was inflexible:** All voicemail was delivered to one private mailbox. The practitioner that arrived to the office first was the one to hear the message, whether or not it was a message intended for them. If the message was not their own, the practitioner could not easily forward the voicemail to the right party.
- **Fax service = additional expense & risk:** The group needed to purchase a fax machine, and printed faxes needed to be picked up in person at the office. Printed faxes presented HIPAA and privacy issues.
- **Variable costs made budgeting difficult:** Due to long distance costs, the group's telephone bill was different each month and discount for prepayment was not an option.
- **Delayed client response:** Without call forwarding to the practitioner's location, clients left voicemails that often took a long time to be received and returned.
- **Inflexible, difficult to manage service:** Making changes to phone service always required a lengthy call to the phone company. Often, the phone company did not offer required services & expense was an issue.
- **Call blocking expensive & nearly impossible:** Blocking telemarketing calls added expense and again, a call to the phone company was required each and every time a new block was required.

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FINDING AN OPTIMAL SOLUTION

It was important to first understand the business needs of the practice, what growth the group expected, and how each practitioner's ideal office telephone would work. Group members were very concerned about the inflexibility, expense and latency of response the standard telephone service they had purchased offered.

Four major requirements were identified:

- **Toll-free service was needed** to provide prospects with a no-cost way to reach out to practitioners. The local phone number used by the practice previously was long distance for many of their clients.
- **Roaming extension capability was vital to client satisfaction.** Many of the practitioners floated between the two shared offices, as well as their home offices. Often, client messages would go unanswered in a timely manner and clients rarely ever got to speak with a real person when they called in. Calls needed to be forwarded directly to phones of each practitioner's choosing.
- **Privacy was of utmost concern** and could be maintained with private extensions for each practitioner.
- **Flexibility and customizable service was needed.** The local phone service was too inflexible and customizing the service required countless hours calling technical support and unknown cost increases.

OUTCOMES

After gathering requirements from the practitioners, several toll-free service providers were identified and evaluated for: fit with business requirements, service features, quality of service, and total cost of ownership.

In this case, Dennis Little recommended [RingCentral](#)'s toll-free PBX service, then provided a demo of the service and customization options to the practitioners. Dennis worked with the group members to design their call flows, establish and manage the service ongoing. **Several key outcomes make this project an ongoing success story:**

- **Increased client & prospect satisfaction:**
 - Calls are immediately routed to a practitioner's personal phones, allowing **improved response time** and **reduced loss to competitors**.
 - **Accessibility and convenience improved** with a single toll-free number to reach the practice.
- **Ease of customization & right-sized service:** Management of the system is completely web-based and the practitioners can subscribe to just the services they need, as and when they need them, without contract.
- **Privacy guaranteed:** Calls are routed directly to individual practitioners, insuring client privacy.
- **Reduced total cost of ownership:** Phone expense is nearly 15% lower for a much more effective service.

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