

Ask the Right Questions When Moving Your Phone System

By H. James Brown

» Moving an entire phone system can seem more daunting than moving an entire business. Almost without exception, problems arise because of lack of proper planning. Keep these points in mind during a phone-system move:

Features. What would you like your phone system to do in the new location that is not happening now? Most likely, you won't need to upgrade or replace the system, but this is the time to review the features that are currently activated and programmed. Every phone system has hundreds of built-in features, most of which you may not even know are available: speed-call numbers, call coverage, group ringing, automatic callback, distinctive ringing, etc. Generally, minor programming changes are included in the cost of moving the system.

Upgrade. Is this the time to either upgrade your phone-system software or replace the system? If you do the upgrade during a move instead of doing it later, it may save you money.

Re-label phones. Is it time to install new label strips on your phones? If the extension numbers are changing or you are adding a new programmed button, then perhaps it is. Otherwise, save the expense.

Cabling. Be smart about this. If you need new voice and data cable runs at your new location, have one vendor do it all. This single source will save you money and create less work for you. Figure how many "runs" you want to each desk location. An absolute minimum is one voice and one data cable (although it's common to see as many as six cable runs at a desk location). If there's any possibility of adding a workspace to a specific location in the future, run the cables now. Pre-wiring for future needs will cost far less in time and aggravation. Don't forget to have the wiring contractor pull a permit to do cabling, and make sure the proper cable (plenum-rated or non-plenum-rated cable) is specified.

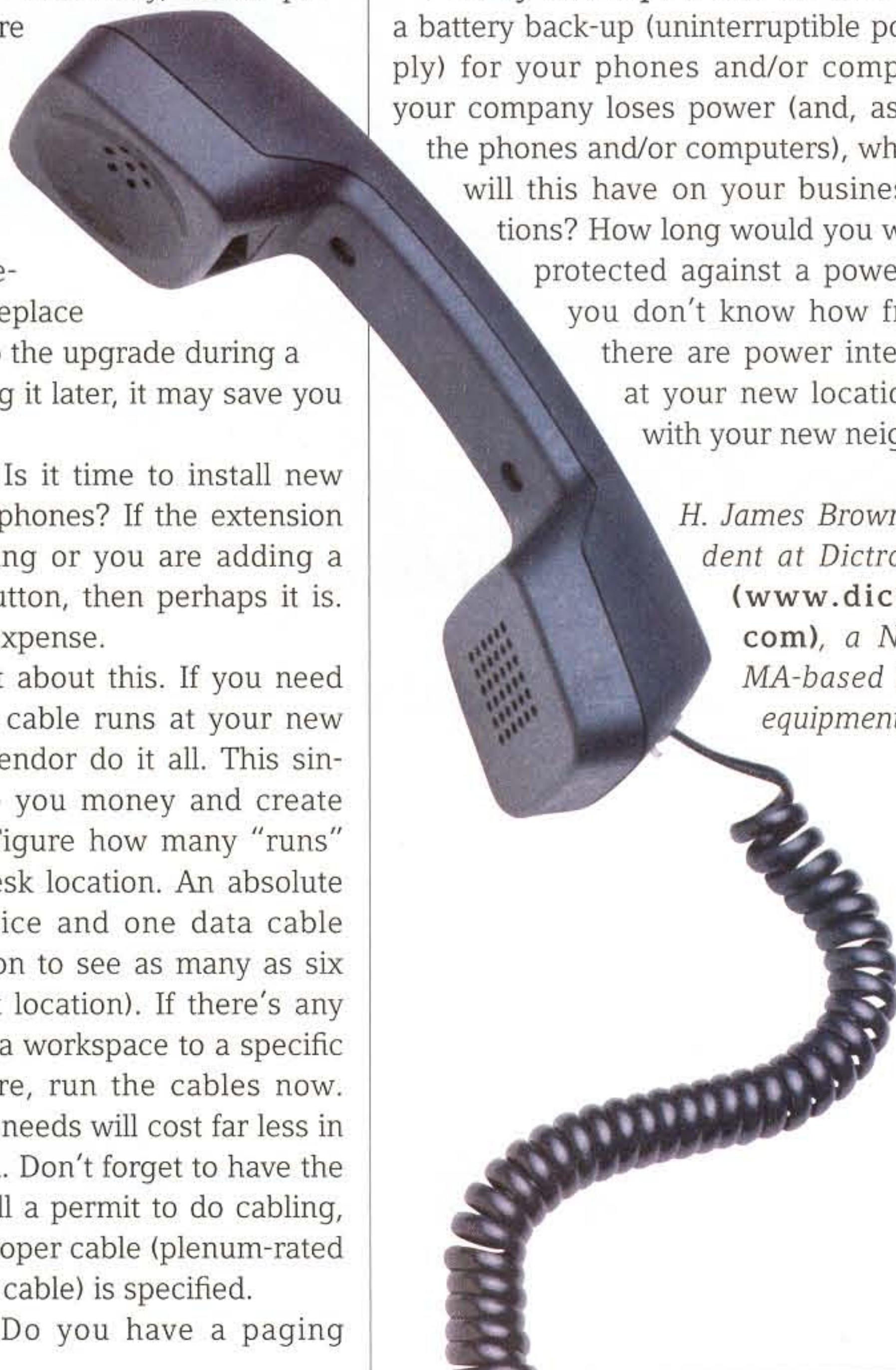
Paging system. Do you have a paging

system now and will you need one at the new location? Can you "page all" through your existing phones? How many zones are needed? One for "all call"? One for the "warehouse"? Will you need "one-way paging" or a "talkback" capability? Make sure the cable installer also mounts and wires the speakers.

Power and ground. Ask your phone vendor what the power requirements are in volts, amps, and number of required outlets. Is it preferable to have this power on a dedicated circuit breaker? Phone systems also require a valid "earth" ground; ask your electrician to run a cable for a valid earth ground to a ground bar near the location of the phone system.

Battery back-up. Is this the time to install a battery back-up (uninterruptible power supply) for your phones and/or computers? If your company loses power (and, as a result, the phones and/or computers), what impact will this have on your business operations? How long would you want to be protected against a power loss? If you don't know how frequently there are power interruptions at your new location, check with your new neighbors.

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Number Crunch?

Although it might seem basic, companies moving their phone systems should start with the basics. Contact your telephone company and ask that they provide you with a list of all numbers. Don't be surprised if there are numbers you didn't know you had, such as an alarm line, modems, and conference phones. There's also a chance you may be paying for lines that are no longer used. Decide how many lines you will need at your new location. If you're unsure, check to see if the phone system can give you line-usage data. Also, complaints about busy signals may indicate the need for additional lines.

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