ASTUTE HEADSET PURCHASING





12 things you must know before choosing a hands-free vendor & solution

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Description

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Crisp, clear communication is of paramount importance when dealing with one’s customers. Headsets play an integral part in this. Sourcing the correct hands-free solution is vital if you want comfortable, efficient agents who will perform at their best and keep your customers satisfied.

Starbase Telecoms, SA’s largest independent headset distributor, has more than 15 years experience in the supply and service of telephone headsets. Here is some useful 'inside-information' that will assist you in choosing a vendor and hands-free product that suits your needs. These points are in no particular order as they are all equally important.

Product Range: Make sure that your headset vendor stocks a wide selection of hands-free products from different manufacturers. Apart from the obvious advantage of having a wider range to choose from, this will also ensure that you receive unbiased advice when choosing a headset. Headset advice from brand-specific vendors is seldom as objective as advice from vendors who have a variety of brands at their disposal.

Track record: Don't be fooled by vendors who haven't been in the headset business very long, but tell you that they're experts anyway. They won't have the in-depth product and industry knowledge of vendors that have been around for a number of years. An important consideration is whether or not these newcomers will still be in business when you need help. Choose your headset vendor as carefully as you would any other business partner. There is no substitute for track record and experience.

References: Some sales people will tell you anything just to get a sale. Ask for contactable references that will provide you with accurate comment on the vendor's after-sales service levels, industry knowledge and product quality.

Servicing: This is the area most often overlooked by headset purchasers. Your initial purchase price accounts for only 30 - 50% of the cost of owning a headset over a two to four year period. Repair costs, consumables and downtime make up the rest, with repair costs topping the list.

Sadly, SA's headset industry has a fly-by-night element that is firmly focussed on the initial headset sale and not after-sales service. We regularly receive requests for service from businesses that have bought from these vendors.

TIP: Find out up-front who will look after the maintenance on your new headsets and whether or not the vendor has an established repair centre.

Maintenance contracts: Many maintenance contracts are simply a way of tying the customer into a long-term relationship with the vendor whilst offering very little value. These contracts are costly so make sure you get your money's worth if you are considering this option. One headset manufacturer, VXI, offers a 2-year unlimited warranty. This eliminates the need for maintenance contracts.

Please remember: The majority of headset failures are caused by “user abuse”, yet this type of damage is specifically excluded from most contracts.

Training: Most agents need to be trained in headset use. Many operational problems such as faint outgoing speech, user discomfort and breakages can be attributed to ignorance. Ensure that your vendor offers adequate training.

Replacing Telephones: You don't always have to replace your existing phone with a headset telephone. Many standard analogue phones can be inexpensively converted to take a headset. Find out if this applies to your phone before spending more than you should.

Amplifiers: You don't always need an amplifier for your headset. Many of today's telephones already have amplification incorporated in their design - making a headset amplifier superfluous. Ask your vendor if this is the case with your particular telephone or contact us for advice. Don't pay for something you don't need.

Noise Cancelling: Although N/C microphones are imperative in exceptionally noisy environments and are a must-have when recording calls, omni-directional microphones are well suited to the majority of work environments and often cost less. They are also less position-sensitive than N/C microphones, which must be precisely positioned so callers can hear the users properly.

Binaural Headsets: Sound-in-both-ears or binaural headsets should only be recommended for exceptionally noisy environments or for jobs that require a high level of concentration. Many people feel cut-off or excluded from their surroundings when they wear binaural headsets. Single-sided or monaural headsets are less expensive than binaural headsets and are perfectly acceptable for 90% of work environments.

Sound Quality: There are vast differences in sound quality between different makes of headsets. Some manufacturers produce great headsets, others leave much to be desired. Remember, it is just as important that your callers hear you clearly as it is for you to hear them clearly!

TIP: Test your headset on a few external calls before purchasing.

Hygiene: Due to the personal nature of headsets, we recommend that they are not shared. If this is unavoidable, always use a separate set of accessories (ear tips, ear cushions, voice tubes etc.) and wipe the headset down with a soft, damp cloth before and after use.

In conclusion, your headset is going to be worn for most of the working day, so make sure that it is comfortable, has great sound quality and suits your hairstyle & office image.

Don't waste your money by settling for second-best!