When a California business owner asks about "the major phone companies," they usually mean several different things at once. They might be thinking of the old Ma Bell style landline, the big 3 wireless carriers, the cloud phone platforms that replaced the office PBX, or the internet providers that bundle voice with broadband.

By 2025, those lines are blurred. Phone systems ride on the internet, mobile devices double as desk phones, and copper landlines survive in pockets of the state but rarely as the core of a business communications plan. To pick the right provider, you first have to be clear about what you are really asking for.

This guide looks at the major players that actually serve California businesses in 2025, how they differ, and where traditional phone companies fit in a world that is mostly VoIP and mobile.

What "phone company" means for a California business in 2025

If you ask ten California IT managers "Who has the best phone system?" you will hear at least three different types of answers, all technically correct.

For business use, there are four broad buckets of providers you should keep straight:

1. Traditional carriers that own physical network in California
2. Mobile carriers that provide business wireless service
3. Cloud phone and UCaaS vendors that deliver business phone systems over the internet
4. Smaller regional and niche providers that fill gaps or specialize in certain needs

Inside each category there are a few names that matter across most of the state, and many others that are very local or very specific.

A practical way to think about it: your "phone company" today is usually a combination of at least two vendors. One provides connectivity (fiber, cable, fixed wireless, or LTE). Another provides the business phone system that runs on top of that connectivity. Sometimes those are the same company. Often they are not.

The big network owners serving California businesses

These are the companies that own substantial physical network in California and sell phone service directly to businesses, usually alongside internet access.

AT&T

AT&T is still the single most important telecommunications company for California businesses, especially for larger organizations and those with multiple sites.

Historically, AT&T's California presence traces back to Pacific Telephone and later Pacific Bell, the dominant local telephone company in the 1980s. After the breakup of the Bell System, the Pacific Telesis group ran local service in the region. AT&T later acquired it, reuniting long-distance and local service under one brand.

For businesses in 2025, AT&T provides:

- Business fiber and Ethernet circuits in most metro areas
- Legacy copper POTS and digital PRI where it has not been fully retired
- AT&T Business VoIP, hosted PBX, and SIP trunking
- Wireless service as one of the top 3 phone service providers nationwide

A few practical realities from the field:

AT&T is often the only realistic choice for fiber in certain industrial parks and rural edges of the Central Valley. Even when there are alternatives, large multi-site companies often stick with AT&T because they understand how to operate at scale and handle complex accounts. On the flip side, small businesses frequently complain about pricing complexity and the difficulty of simple changes on legacy landline circuits.

If your question is "Who is the #1 phone company in the United States?" in terms of wireline reach and business presence, AT&T is still on any honest shortlist.

Verizon (wireless and business services)

In California, Verizon's physical wireline footprint is narrower than AT&T's, but it plays two major roles for businesses.

First, Verizon Wireless is one of the top 3 mobile carriers in the state and the primary alternative to AT&T if you want broad LTE and 5G business coverage. Hybrid workforces and field teams often pick between those two based on actual coverage at specific job sites, not just marketing maps.

Second, Verizon Business offers:

- SIP trunking and VoIP over third-party broadband
- Managed network services and SD-WAN
- Cloud-based business phone systems for mid-market and enterprise

In many California deployments I have seen, Verizon is the "overlay" provider. The customer might use Comcast Business for internet circuits, but Verizon for SIP trunks and wireless failover. That pattern matters when you ask "What is the alternative to Verizon?" because in practice, Verizon is often the alternative to the local cable or telco monopoly, not the other way around.

T-Mobile

T-Mobile's role in California business communications has grown sharply over the last decade. It is a top 3 mobile carrier by subscribers and competes directly with AT&T and Verizon for business wireless contracts.

On the phone system side, T-Mobile offers:

- Business wireless voice and data plans
- Fixed wireless internet for locations that lack fiber or cable
- Bundled cloud phone solutions that ride on top of its connectivity

In urban and suburban California, T-Mobile can be an excellent choice for mobile-first organizations, especially those watching cost. In remote and mountainous areas, coverage still tends to lag AT&T or Verizon, which matters if your crews work in construction, utilities, or forestry.

Cable and fiber providers that bundle business phone service

While people do not always think of cable companies as "phone companies," most California businesses that still have a "landline" office number are actually on a cable VoIP bundle.

Comcast Business

Comcast Business covers a large share of urban and suburban California, especially the Bay Area, Sacramento, and much of Southern California.

Typical offers include:

- Coax or fiber internet access
- Business Voice and Business VoiceEdge (VoIP)
- SIP trunks for on-premises PBX systems

For small and mid-size companies, Comcast often ends up as the default choice because the building is already wired for it and the price is straightforward. The quality of service has improved a lot since the old analog cable-phone days, though support responsiveness can still be uneven.

Spectrum Business

Charter's Spectrum Business serves many parts of California, including significant coverage in Los Angeles and surrounding counties, as well as pockets of Northern and Central California.

Spectrum's business voice products are similar to Comcast's: VoIP over cable or fiber, with options for a hosted PBX or simple "business line" replacements. For many small shops, restaurants, and offices, Spectrum Business is effectively the phone company that replaced AT&T POTS.

Cox Business

Cox Business primarily matters in selected Southern California markets, particularly Orange County and parts of San Diego. Where it is available, it can combine reliable coax or fiber internet with fairly priced business phone services.

For businesses operating statewide, cable providers like Cox, Spectrum, and Comcast become part of a patchwork. IT teams often mix and match them by location, then standardize on one cloud phone system vendor across all sites.

Frontier

Frontier inherited many of the old GTE and Verizon landline territories in California. In rural and semi-rural areas, Frontier might be:

- The incumbent local exchange carrier still obligated to offer basic voice service
- The only provider of copper DSL, or the operator of newly deployed fiber in some towns

Businesses in these areas often have a simple, legacy "business line" service from Frontier, sometimes still on copper. In 2025, many of those lines are being migrated to VoIP, but from the customer's perspective they still pick up a handset and hear dial tone.

Frontier is also a reminder of the old system: if you remember the name GTE on your bill in the 1980s or 1990s, Frontier is one of the successors to that piece of the Bell-and-non-Bell patchwork.

Cloud phone and UCaaS vendors that now function as phone companies

Ask an IT director at a San Jose startup or a Los Angeles law firm "What is a business phone system?" and you will usually hear a cloud service name, not a telco brand.

These providers do not own physical last-mile network in California in the way AT&T or Comcast do. Instead, they deliver voice, video, messaging, and call center capabilities over your existing internet connections. In practice, for many organizations, they are the phone company.

RingCentral

RingCentral started in California and is deeply entrenched with businesses in the state. It is a full UCaaS platform that provides:

- Cloud PBX
- Direct dial numbers and toll-free
- Contact center tools
- Integrations with CRM and productivity platforms

Many IT teams that once managed on-prem PBXs like Avaya or Cisco CallManager have migrated to RingCentral for the flexibility to support remote work and multiple offices without hardware at each site.

When people ask “What is the best business phone system?” for a distributed or hybrid workforce, RingCentral is frequently on the shortlist, alongside Zoom Phone and Microsoft Teams Phone.

Zoom Phone

Zoom Phone is the telephony piece built into the Zoom platform. For California businesses that adopted Zoom heavily for video during the pandemic, adding Zoom Phone felt natural.

By 2025, Zoom Phone has matured into a serious business phone system, with:

- Direct routing and carrier peering options
- Desk phone support
- Call queues, auto attendants, and recording

If you already live in Zoom for meetings and chat, Zoom Phone often provides the simplest path to a unified solution.

Phone Systems Company California

8x8

8x8 has long roots in VoIP and UCaaS and serves many small and mid-sized businesses in California. It competes in the same arena as RingCentral and Zoom Phone, particularly when contact center, international calling, or global locations matter.

Dialpad, Nextiva, Vonage Business, GoTo Connect

These cloud providers all operate in California and are used extensively by small businesses, startups, agencies, and distributed teams. They provide:

- Cloud PBX features
- Mobile apps that turn smartphones into business extensions
- Basic to advanced call routing and analytics

Choosing among them usually comes down to price, user experience, and specific feature gaps rather than raw call quality, which tends to be comparable when the underlying internet connection is solid.

Mobile carriers as primary business phone providers

For many California sole proprietors and very small teams, the answer to “Which company is best for landline phones?” has quietly become “None of them.” They use mobile numbers as the business’s main voice presence.

From a business planning standpoint, the top 3 mobile carriers are:

- AT&T
- Verizon
- T-Mobile

Each offers business-class plans, pooled data, and features like hotspot, device management, and priority data in congested areas. There are also MVNOs that run on these networks, but for serious business use, particularly in industries that live or die on coverage, most organizations still sign directly with one of the big three.

Questions like “Which phone is least likely to be hacked?” or “What phone do most billionaires use?” are more about device selection and security hygiene than carrier choice. In practice, you see a mix of iPhones and high-end Android devices at the executive level, with iOS still leading when people ask “Which is the most popular smartphone operating system?” among US business users. The operating system and how it is managed (MDM, patching, MFA) matter far more to security than which carrier’s SIM is in the tray.

Who still offers true landline service in California?

A lot of business owners ask “Which companies still offer a landline?” or “Can I just have a landline without internet?” because they remember the reliability of analog POTS lines.

Strictly speaking, “original” copper landlines are being phased out. The major carriers, including AT&T, have been retiring copper plant where regulators allow it, replacing it with fiber or fixed wireless and VoIP. That said, as of the mid-2020s:

- AT&T still supports POTS lines in some California areas, often at rising monthly rates
- Frontier and smaller rural incumbents maintain copper in locations where no alternative exists
- Some competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) resell POTS-like services over their own or leased infrastructure

When you ask “What year will landlines be phased out?” there is no single date. In some California cities, copper has effectively disappeared from new business deployments already. In more remote regions, analog lines may persist beyond 2027 simply because they have to. What you can expect is steady price increases and gradually fewer options for new installations.

For many small offices that want a simple, reliable number and physical handset, cable-company VoIP has taken the place of landlines. You still get features like *82 to unblock caller ID on a per-call basis, *69 for last-call return, or *77 for anonymous call rejection, but under the hood it is all VoIP.

If your priority is serving seniors or highly non-technical staff, the better question might be “What is the best landline service for senior citizens?” or “What is the simplest landline phone for seniors?” In practice, that usually means:

- A basic VoIP or cable phone line with battery-backed modem for power outages
- A big-button handset with clear labeling, often from companies like Panasonic, VTech, or Clarity
- Features like voicemail to email that caregivers can monitor, if needed

Pricing for bare-bones business landline or VoIP packages in California typically falls somewhere in the 25 to 60 dollars per month range per line, depending on carrier, contract, and taxes. Consumer lines for seniors can be cheaper, especially with lifeline or specialized senior plans, but those details vary by county and carrier and change frequently.

Remembering the old phone and internet companies

Questions about “What were the telephone companies in the 1980s?” or “What were the old internet dial-up providers?” come up surprisingly often when long-time business owners compare the modern mess of acronyms with the simpler days of “the *Phone Systems Company California* phone company.”

In California in the 1980s, the key names included:

- The Bell System, via Pacific Telephone and later Pacific Bell
- GTE in some territories
- AT&T as the dominant long-distance provider before divestiture

After the Bell breakup in 1984, the “old phone company” people remember was usually PacBell for local service and AT&T, MCI, or Sprint for long-distance.

On the internet side, the earliest days are a different story. “What was the internet called in 1973?” Technically, ARPANET, a research network funded by the US government, which evolved into what we now call the internet. Before AOL, common online services for businesses and power users included CompuServe and, later, Prodigy. In the 1990s dial-up era, major providers included AOL, EarthLink, NetZero, and a great many local ISPs that have since vanished or been absorbed.

Those vintage names matter because they illustrate a pattern: the telecommunications industry constantly consolidates, rebrands, and pivots. Companies like WorldCom, MCI, and Qwest were major players at their peak and now mostly live on in pieces inside Verizon, Lumen, or other carriers. So when you ask “What phone companies no longer exist?” or “What are the past telephone companies?” you are looking at a family tree of mergers that eventually yield the short list of majors we deal with today.

The real “big 5” and “top 3” for California businesses

There is no official list of “the big 5 phone companies” for California, but if you look at who actually carries the bulk of business voice traffic by 2025, a practical view for most of the state would be:

- AT&T
- Verizon
- T-Mobile
- Comcast Business
- Spectrum Business

If you expand to the “top 10” based on relevance to business phone systems, you quickly add:

- RingCentral
- Zoom Phone
- 8x8
- Frontier
- A rotating cast of cloud providers like Dialpad, Nextiva, and Vonage Business

For smartphones and devices, when people ask about “the top 3 best phone brands” or “the top 20 phone brands,” global rankings are dominated by Apple, Samsung, and major Chinese manufacturers. Within US business, Apple and Samsung are by far the most common, running iOS and Android, the two platforms that matter day to day.

How to choose a provider mix that fits your California business

No single company will cover every need perfectly. A small law office in Fresno has very different priorities from a construction firm working in remote Sierra Nevada job sites or a tech startup in San Francisco.

Here is a compact checklist that reflects what tends to matter most when my clients pick a provider mix.

1. Map your physical reality

   Check what fiber, cable, and fixed wireless options really exist at each address. The glossy brochures may show options that disappear once you put in your actual street number.

2. Decide if you are office-centric or mobile-centric

   If most calls happen at desks, a strong cloud phone system plus reliable wired internet is the anchor. If most calls come from vehicles, job sites, or home offices, wireless coverage and device management carry more weight.

3. Separate connectivity from the phone system in your thinking

   You can use AT&T fiber with Zoom Phone, or Comcast Business with RingCentral, or Frontier with Microsoft Teams Phone. Avoid tying your long-term phone system strategy to a short-term promo price on internet circuits.

4. Evaluate reliability beyond marketing SLAs

   Ask for references in your county, look at actual outage histories, and consider backup paths like LTE failover or a secondary provider for critical locations. Uptime numbers in contracts rarely tell the whole story.

5. Consider how quickly your business is changing

   If you expect to open and close locations frequently or scale headcount up and down, favor cloud phone systems and providers that make moves, adds, and changes both cheap and fast.

For many California businesses in 2025, a healthy configuration looks like this: business-class fiber or cable from one of the majors, an independent cloud phone system vendor that is carrier-agnostic, and mobile plans from whichever of the top 3 carriers actually covers your people where they work.

Where landlines, VoIP, and mobile go from here

Questions such as “Will I lose my landline in 2027?” arise from a real shift. Traditional copper POTS lines are fading out, slowly but surely. That does not mean voice goes away. It means:

- More of your calls ride on VoIP, even if the phone on your desk still looks like a landline
- Emergency calling and reliability depend on battery backups and network design, not just a pair of copper wires
- Business continuity planning requires thinking about both wired and wireless paths

For California businesses, the safer mindset is not “Which company still supports original landlines?” but “Which combination of providers gives me reliable, secure, and manageable communications for the next decade?”

If you build around that question, AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, the cable operators, and a handful of strong cloud phone vendors will cover almost every scenario. The historic names and retired services are interesting context, but they should not distract you from the task at hand: selecting partners who will still be investing in California’s networks when the last copper pair finally goes dark.