

When clients ask me which phone they should standardize on for their teams, the question often shows up in a sideways form:

“What phone do most billionaires use?” “What phone does Elon Musk use?”

Behind that curiosity is a practical concern: how do the people responsible for the most valuable companies on the planet think about communication, security, and reliability? Those are the same problems a 25 person construction firm in Sacramento or a boutique law practice in San Diego has to solve, just on a different scale.

The answer is less about a specific device and more about how serious operators treat their communications stack as a strategic asset instead of a monthly bill they ignore.

Let us start with the obvious curiosity.

So, what phone does Elon Musk actually use?

There is no official, always updated public record of “the one phone” Elon Musk uses. People who work around senior executives will tell you the same thing I have seen for years: high profile leaders rarely rely on a single device or even a single operating system.

From interviews, court documents, and his own posts, a few things are reasonably clear:

- Musk has repeatedly been photographed using various generations of the iPhone. Several biographical accounts mention iPhones as his primary personal device.
- He has publicly criticized both iOS and Android on and off, mostly around app store policies and privacy, but has also said that smartphones are “amazing” and central to how people interact with his companies.
- He has floated the idea of building an “X phone” if Apple or Google ever removed the X app (formerly Twitter) from their app stores. That has not happened, and as of mid 2026 there is no shipping Musk phone on the market.
- Security reports around high profile figures, including Musk and Donald Trump, indicate extensive hardening of devices, strict controls on apps, and heavy support from internal security teams and carriers.

So, the best you can say honestly is this: Elon Musk almost certainly uses a recent flagship smartphone, very likely an iPhone or a top tier Android from brands like Samsung, but he treats it as a managed endpoint inside a larger, tightly controlled communications ecosystem.

That ecosystem piece is where California businesses should be paying attention.

Billionaires, smartphones, and what actually matters

When people ask “What phone do most billionaires use?” they are usually hoping there is a single top 1 phone in the world that will magically make communication secure and productive. The reality is more mundane and more useful.

At the top of the market, the hardware options are well known. The top 3 best phone brands in most global sales rankings are Apple, Samsung, and usually Xiaomi or Oppo, depending on the quarter. Within those, the top 10 most popular phones at any given time are almost all recent iPhone and Galaxy models. The operating systems are even more concentrated. If you survey the top 10 most popular operating systems that people actually touch

daily, the most popular smartphone operating system globally is Android by unit share, even though iOS dominates among high income users in the United States.

Billionaires, senior executives, and security sensitive roles tend to cluster around recent iPhones, high end Samsung devices, and hardened versions of those phones with customized software images. Some carry both iOS and Android devices to test apps, keep work and personal separate, or maintain redundancy with different carriers.

What matters to them far more than the logo on the back of the device is:

1. How tightly the phones are integrated with the company's business phone system.
2. How well they can control security, data access, and identity.
3. How resilient their communication remains if a carrier fails, a device is lost, or a region loses power.

Those three points are exactly where many California organizations are still stuck in a 1998 mindset, even as their staff carry 2025 level hardware.

From “the phone company” to a fragmented telecom world

If you grew up when the internet was still something you “dialed into,” your mental model of telecom probably starts with a single entity: “the phone company.”

For most of the 20th century, the old phone company in America was AT&T, operating the Bell System. By the 1980s, after antitrust action, that broke apart into the so called Baby Bells. People in the 80s remember names like Pacific Bell in California, NYNEX in the Northeast, and Southwestern Bell. If someone asks “What was the name of the telephone company in the 80s” or “What was the old phone company called,” that is usually what they mean.

Around the same time, a whole generation of old dial up internet companies emerged. In the 1990s, the big internet providers included AOL, CompuServe, Prodigy, EarthLink, and local ISPs that lived off banks of modems in strip malls. Before AOL became a household name, there were closed networks like ARPANET, academic systems, and in 1973 the term “internet” referred to early interconnected network concepts that later grew into what we use now.

Telecom has kept fragmenting since then. If you set aside small regional players and MVNOs, the big 5 phone companies and major telecommunications companies that anchor the US market now are AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Comcast, and Charter (Spectrum). You could stretch that to a top 20 phone brands list globally by including equipment makers like Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo, Motorola, Nokia, and a handful of others, but from the standpoint of a California business owner, most of your connectivity choices ride on infrastructure controlled by those few.

This history matters for one simple reason: the era when you could point to “the phone company” and trust that plain old telephone service would quietly work for the next 30 years is fading out.

The uncomfortable truth about landlines in California

Almost every strategy conversation I have with a business that has been around for more than 15 or 20 years includes the same anxiety:

“Are landlines going away? What year will landlines be phased out? Will I lose my landline in 2027?”

The short answer is that copper based original landlines, often called POTS, are being deliberately phased out by carriers because they are expensive to maintain. AT&T and others have asked regulators, including in California, for permission to withdraw much of their traditional landline service and migrate customers to internet based voice.

Several key points are worth understanding:

First, [Phone Systems Company California](#) companies that still offer landline service often mean something different than what most people picture. Which companies still offer a landline? The big names like AT&T, Verizon, Frontier, Spectrum, and some regional providers still provide what looks and behaves like a landline, but underneath it is frequently digital voice over fiber or coaxial cable.

Second, what companies now support original landlines over copper loops is a shrinking group. In many areas, especially rural California, those copper lines are aging, and repairs are slow. Some past telephone companies and smaller carriers have merged or simply disappeared, becoming phone companies that no longer exist except as logos in old bill drawers.

Third, you can still find landline like services without bundling internet. Many of my older clients ask “Can I just have a landline without internet?” The answer is usually yes, but the product description may call it “voice only” or “home phone” or “business POTS replacement.” The cheapest landline phone service without internet or the cheapest landline provider in a given ZIP code could be a cable company, not the traditional telco.

For senior citizens, those details get personal. People ask about the best landline service for senior citizens, the simplest landline phone for seniors, and the best landline phone provider for seniors because they want something that simply rings, has large buttons, and keeps working when a smartphone confuses them. Options exist, some with senior discounts. As of this writing, AT&T landline pricing for seniors in some California regions sits in the 20 to 40 dollar per month range for basic voice, but the fine print can change fast, and promotional bundles can hide the true price.

The right way to think about “landlines” now is not nostalgia for the dial tone of the 1980s, but a focused question: which companies still offer a landline equivalent that operates during a power outage, works without broadband, and integrates cleanly into a business phone system? That is far more important than whether the marketing brochure uses the word “POTS.”

Old codes, new expectations

If you grew up with touch tone phones, you probably remember special star codes without thinking. *69 to call back the last number. *77 to activate anonymous call rejection in some regions. *82 to unblock your caller ID on a per call basis if you normally block it.

Those codes still exist in many systems. The *#69 code used for last call return, and the *82 unblock function on a landline, are examples of how deep telephone culture ran through daily life. Today, most of your staff will never touch those keys. They expect visual voicemail, tap to call back, and spam detection handled automatically in software.

This shift from code driven control to app based control is part of why the question “What is a business phone system?” deserves a fresh look.

What a modern business phone system really is

I like to explain a business phone system to clients this way: imagine you stripped away every handset and app, and all you were left with was the logic of who should be reachable where, under what conditions, and with what level of security and logging. That logic is your phone system.

Historically, that logic lived in a PBX in the broom closet. Now it usually lives in a cloud platform, sometimes across several integrated tools. The top 3 phone service providers for cloud voice in the US market shift rankings

depending on whether you include pure telecoms or collaboration suites, but the common leaders include Microsoft Teams Phone, Zoom Phone, RingCentral, 8x8, and Vonage, alongside voice offerings from AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile.

People attach rankings to this: [Phone Systems Company California](#) who has the best phone system, who is the number 1 phone company, what is the best business phone system. Those questions only have meaningful answers when you add context. A 10 seat dental office in Fresno, a 200 person distributed software company in Oakland, and a logistics operation with warehouses across California all care about very different things.

From watching dozens of implementations, here is how the serious operators - including Musk style organizations - tend to think about it.

They start with identity, not dial tone. Phones are just endpoints that attach to user identities and roles. A CEO's number may simultaneously ring a personal iPhone, an Android test device, a VoIP desktop phone, and a softphone app, all governed by policies.

They decouple connectivity from collaboration. Carriers provide raw connectivity. Business phone platforms overlay routing, call recording, IVR, and integrations. Smart companies deliberately choose an alternative to Verizon or AT&T for their core phone logic if it gives them better analytics or integration with CRM, even if they still buy raw circuits from those carriers.

They assume failure. The best systems have active failover between carriers, between data centers, and between device types. If a wildfire takes out local fiber, your clients can still reach someone. If an executive's phone is lost, IT can wipe it and reassign numbers in minutes.

Security: which phone is least likely to be hacked?

I get nervous when anyone asks "Which phone is least likely to be hacked?" as if there is a magical safe device. Every platform can be compromised in some way. What matters is relative risk and the controls you wrap around the device.

Broadly, if configured and updated correctly, modern iPhones have a strong track record for ordinary users because Apple tightly controls the ecosystem. High end Android devices, especially from vendors like Samsung with their Knox platform, also offer serious protection, but require a bit more discipline because Android as a whole is more open. Niche hardened phones exist too, but they usually trade usability and app support for specialized security features.

Billionaires and political leaders add several layers on top: mobile device management, restricted app lists, custom VPN routing, and sometimes secure communication apps separated from normal texting. When commentators talk about "What phone does Donald Trump use" for instance, the real story is not the specific model but the tug of war between convenience, habit, and the security apparatus trying to wrap controls around a single person's preferences.

For a California business, the lesson is not to copy their hardware. It is to copy their posture: assume that every device is one part of a broader attack surface. Treat phones, laptops, tablets, and even desk phones as managed assets behind an identity and access strategy, not as personal toys that just happen to receive work calls.

Landline nostalgia, senior reality, and the 2027 question

The other group that faces a real communications crossroads is older adults. Whenever we help a family business transition their phone system, someone's parents, often in their 70s or 80s, ask directly: "Will I lose my landline in

2027?"

The date 2027 circulates because several carriers have announced timelines to retire copper POTS in large regions by the middle of this decade. That does not mean every handset in California goes dead on January 1 of that year. It does mean the direction of travel is clear, and it is time to plan.

Senior friendly options remain. You can still find the simplest landline phone for seniors: powered desk phones with big buttons, loud ringers, and no extra bells and whistles. Some companies still offer landline only plans that work with those devices. Others provide cellular based "home phone" units that mimic a landline, often at a lower monthly cost, while connecting back to the mobile network.

Who is the cheapest landline provider or which company is best for landline phones in a given city can change with promotions. I encourage clients to evaluate providers the way Musk would evaluate a vendor:

First, ask exactly what physical path the calls travel. Copper, fiber, cable, cellular.

Second, ask what happens to dial tone during a power outage and for how many hours any backup battery lasts.

Third, ask how easy it is for the provider to port numbers out if you switch systems later.

For seniors, the easiest phone is usually the one that changes the least. Sometimes that means pairing a basic desk phone with a behind the scenes VoIP adapter that your IT team manages. They never need to know it is not a Bell System line.

What California businesses should actually do next

If you strip away the celebrity intrigue, here is what Musk's approach to technology, and the broader evolution of phone companies, suggest for a California business that wants to be resilient and sustainable.

Here is a simple framework that has worked well with clients who want something practical they can act on within a quarter:

1. Inventory and classify every number you own. Include published main lines, direct inward dial numbers, fax lines, elevator phones, alarm lines, and legacy landlines you keep paying for. You cannot modernize what you have not mapped.
2. Decide what you want your "default identity" to be. This includes domain names, email addresses, and voice numbers. Your phone system should make it obvious which numbers are long term assets tied to your brand and which are disposable.
3. Pick one core cloud phone platform and integrate it with your collaboration tools. Whether that is Teams Phone, Zoom Phone, RingCentral, or another credible option, stop spreading your call logic across three unrelated systems.
4. Reduce dependence on copper. Where original landlines are still in place, plan a migration path to fiber, cable, or cellular based solutions that still meet your power outage and life safety requirements.
5. Align mobile device choices with management capability instead of fashion. It is fine if executives carry iPhones and field techs carry Androids, but only if your IT team can enforce updates, remote wipes, and identity controls on both.

That checklist will not make your organization look glamorous, but it will quietly put you into the same category as the companies whose names show up in lists of the 7 big tech companies and other industry leaders: organizations that treat communications as infrastructure, not as a utility bill.

A brief word on operating systems and lock in

Many executives forget that phones and carriers sit on top of operating systems they do not control. If you are betting your business on a single vendor stack, understand what that means.

On the desktop and server side, the big 5 operating systems most businesses bump into are Windows, macOS, Linux, iOS, and Android. There are others of course, but those dominate. On mobile specifically, Android and iOS handle essentially all of the volume.

Ask your IT and compliance teams how your business phone system interacts with each of those environments. If your call recordings live in a platform that only integrates with one OS, or if your softphone client barely works on older Android versions used in the field, you will feel that fragility when you try to grow.



The advertisement for Method Technologies features a blue and white color scheme. On the left, the text 'MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDER CALIFORNIA' is written in large, bold, black capital letters. Below this, the company name 'Method Technologies' is in a blue serif font, followed by the address '22600 Savi Ranch Pkwy, Yorba Linda, CA 92887', phone number '(877) 590-2741', and website 'https://www.mtinc.net/'. To the right of the text is a photograph of two IT professionals, a man and a woman, working in a server room. The man is seated at a desk with multiple monitors, and the woman is standing next to him, holding a tablet. In the background, server racks are visible. A QR code is located at the bottom right of the advertisement.

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The early internet had something similar. In the 1990s, people asked “What were the internet providers in the 90s?” and the answers included AOL, EarthLink, and local dial ups. Before AOL, you had walled gardens and academic networks. Today we rely on open protocols more than those names. The first website ever, hosted at CERN in 1991, was little more than text explaining what the World Wide Web was. From those humble, open roots, we now have a massive system that includes both bright possibilities and the dark side of the internet: harassment, fraud, surveillance, and addiction.

Phone systems are following a related path. The brand on the invoice matters less than whether you can move your numbers, your data, and your workflows without being trapped.

What Musk’s phone habits really teach

If you asked me to bet on what Elon Musk, or any comparable executive, will be using as a primary device two or three years from now, I would not pick a specific brand. Devices churn quickly. The top 20 phone brands shift. Some companies go out of business, as many old phone companies already have. New entrants appear, just as dial up stars arrived and faded in the 90s.

The behavior that tends to stay constant looks like this:

They always have more than one way to be reached. Multiple devices, multiple carriers, sometimes even multiple operating systems.

Their visible phone number is not the same as their true identity. Behind the scenes, identity and access management ties everything together.

Their organizations invest heavily in security and continuity, but they work hard to keep the day to day experience simple. The CEO can pick up any device on their desk and get on a call without thinking about the routing tables that make it work.

That mindset is available to every California business, even if you never touch a rocket or an electric car factory. Whether your team still relies on an original landline, carries the latest flagship smartphone, or uses a mixture of both, the strategic questions are the same:

Who needs to talk to whom? Over what channels? Under what constraints? And how do you make that as reliable, secure, and future proof as possible?

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Method Technologies

10805 Holder St, Suite 100, Cypress, CA 90630
(844) 463-8463
<https://www.mtinc.net/technology-relocation.html>





Answer those clearly, and the specific choice of handset becomes what it should have been all along: a practical detail, not a personality test.