Here are a few items to consider when selecting the proper IP Office

What type of multiline phones will be used. The IPO Essential will allow all IPO digital and Avaya IP phones to work but no ETR (Enhanced Tip and Ring) like the 18D 34D etc....

The IPO Partner only allows the 1400 series digital phones and ETR 18D, 34D etc.. phones.

Do I want PBX or Key System?

The IPO Essential is a PBX not a Key System.

A Key System will typically have all lines appearing on all phones where a PBX does not. A PBX uses access codes to make outgoing calls and one line appears on the phone at any time.

The IPO Essential will allow up to 10 phones to operate in the Key System (Squared) mode.

The IPO Partner is a Key System where all lines can appear on all phones.

SIP Trunks / Mobile Twinning

Both systems will allow these features to work.

The IPO Essential can use Time Profiles to establish when Twinning is on or off for a particular extension as well as the Twinning button the phone.

If you have VM Pro, you can also turn Twinning off and on remotely.

The IPO Partner Twinning can be turned on and off from the twinned telephone by pressing the Twinning button or through the Manager program.

Both systems allow you to answer the call on your twinned (cell phone) phone and then pick the call up on your system phone.

The IPO Partner comes with 3 licenses for each feature, the IPO Essential comes with NONE.

System Transition

If a customer is migrating from a Partner ACS system and does not need any special type of phones or features provided by the IPO Essential, then I would suggest the IPO Partner.

The Feature Codes, Extension Numbers, Line Access Codes are the same which will usually make the transition easier.

Technician Training

The programming for the IPO Partner is much easier to understand and can be used as an excellent entry point to understand SIP, Twinning and networking.

The IPO Essential is much more complex and requires the tech to learn several new concepts at the same time.