

# CURE FOR THE COMMON CARRIER

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## *The Trinity of Resolutions*

It is everywhere. Pick up the newspaper. Turn on the TV. It is discussed in every board room or at every planning meeting. Conducting business is as hard as ever and not likely getting much better in the near term. As the calendar flips to a new year, it is the time for resolutions – whether personal or professional. For business, there are three that get repeated over and over again – Reduce Costs, Increase Productivity and Keep Critical Business Systems Available.

### **A Better Bottom Line**

Of course, the ultimate goal is to increase profit. But, with so many things outside your control, the most consistent approach is to cut costs without cutting so deep that you cannot support your customers and vendors. Every penny counts. With so many projects that are critical to growing your business just sitting because the money is not there to continue, wasting any money right now is a sin.

Everyday it seems another mass layoff is announced. After all, one of the largest expense line items is a company's employee costs. Of course, a reduction to your telecom costs will not be your only savior, but every dollar counts these days.

### ***Did You Know ...***

- A review of your telecom services can reduce your bills by an average of 27%. Plus, there are often credits that can be earned for past over billing.
- Most carriers are interested in locking revenues in for an extended period. Even if you have existing contracts, carriers are often willing to renegotiate.
- While simplification is always an objective, value can be added by building a hybrid solution for your telecom with multiple carriers engaged.
- Reviewing your telephone bills periodically can find elements of savings. Don't wait until your contract is coming up for renewal.
- Orion supports more than 75 customers, helping them reduce costs and obtain the greatest value for their dollar.

There is no question that telephone bills can be very confusing. And, spending the time to review them can be tedious. But, periodic reviews can significantly reduce monthly costs.

## **Achieving More with Less**

As organizations look to 2009, many are envisioning having to achieve greater productivity from an ever-decreasing staff. It was once a luxury to have people focused on what they did best, but now, streamlined teams are required to do more. Often stretching them outside their comfort zone or current skill set.

When designing a telecom solution for your organization there are a number of considerations that can help you maximize the productivity of your team. Improved call flow, increased bandwidth frequently at a reduced price and business continuity plans can all add to the effectiveness of your team.

## **Maximizing Uptime**

It's Monday morning and everyone is getting back from the weekend. They look to start making phone calls only to find the telephone lines are down. Or, maybe the Internet is down from an upgrade that did not go well over the weekend. Your team that is supposed to be making you money is just sitting around talking about the football game yesterday for the next four hours. In the mean time, your customers are left with no alternative but to call your competition because they cannot reach you.

Telecom service outages happen no matter how stable your provider is. And, when it does, it may take hours just to diagnose where the issue resides. With a little planning, there are small changes that can be made to protect you when issues arise. Call redirection can reroute incoming calls. Redundant Internet can provide a back up path and even increase bandwidth availability day to day. Hybrid carrier solutions can dilute the importance of any one service provider. It is also important to note that these small changes can often be funded by savings from your current bills.

Would you rather have your over worked Office Manager on hold with the telephone company for hours trying to resolve a billing issue or run your office? If your services were to go down, do you want your team endlessly sitting idle while your technical staff scrambles to reestablish your communications or would you rather have a plan to keep people productive? Would you rather reduce your telecom expenses to improve your P&L or continue to pay too much? If you think there has to be a better way, maybe it is time to call Orion Communications.

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**Your Cure for the Common Carrier**

# Telecom Tidbits

from Orion Communications

In our on-going efforts to inform our customer, Orion has added this section of our monthly newsletter highlighting some additional areas of consideration when attempting to implement, manage and trouble shoot telecom services.

## \$4,200,000

This is the amount of money that Orion has saved our customers over the last three years. Some other interesting facts about these engagements:

- Orion has conducted 132 cost savings projects.
- The average savings was almost 27%, ranging from 4.5% to over 65% monthly savings.
- In over 31% of these projects, the customer also received a credit for past over billing.
- Of these projects, the customer that billed the lowest amount each month was \$417 and saved over greater than 26%.
- The largest billing customer was \$175,000 per month and they saved 28%.
- Our average customer saved more than \$1,500 per month on their telecom services.
- In 98% of our projects, customers had some current contractual obligations with their carriers.

Why spend too much for anything? Especially when Orion Communications has a proven track record of helping to reduce telecom expenses.

## The First Bill

The implementation is done and now it is time for the first bill to come. You open it and are shocked. It looks nothing like you expected. Whether you upgraded your services, changed carriers or just renewed your existing contracts, there are some things to consider.

- The first bill often includes prorated charges. Telecom services are usually billed a month in advance so there may be some fractional charges.
- Most services have some form of installation charges, whether they were expected to be waived or not. Check to see if these charges are correct.
- Because services are generally dropped at what is called the demarc, there may be inside wiring charges included to extend the services to where you actually needed them.
- Services are normally rated based on expected contractual terms. In some circumstances, the contract discounts are not applied accordingly.

It is not uncommon for the first bill to be inaccurate. These inaccuracies can often extend for a couple of billing cycles, but things should start to level off pretty quickly aligning with what you had originally expected.

## Are You Moving ...

Changing locations can be challenging. There are many elements to consider. Many times, decisions related to telecom services can often be overlooked. Can you keep important telephone numbers? Does your current service provider even support your new location? How much time will it take to efficiently transition the services? These are all essential points that should be addressed early in the process to ensure that you will be ready to support your customers and vendors as you look to start fresh at a new location.

## Know Your Time Frames

In this economy, it is not uncommon to wait until the last minute to pull the trigger on any decision in an attempt to get the greatest value for your dollar. It is critical to note that telecom often has its own clock with implementations taking five days to three months, if not longer. Make sure that you know the timing early in the process so services can be installed in a timely, but accurate manner. Escalating installations can often do more harm than good. Make sure you are also leaving enough time to make adjustments to your schedule in case things do not go as smoothly as originally expected. Understanding your telecom timeframes can make sure you stay on schedule and on budget.

## Bundled Service

Unlimited local calling, blocks of time for usage, integrated services and the addition of features can all make a promotional bundle look advantageous. But, these packages often cost you more money than is necessary. Sometimes, bundles provide areas for growth without adding expense, but many customers never reach the point where they truly take advantage of the excess capacity. It is also important to note that most carriers allow you to upgrade within your term to account for your changing business requirements. When looking to make a change, plan for your current environment, but leave the door open for short term changes.

## Establishing New Service When You Are Moving ...

When moving, it is beneficial to order a business line as soon as possible. Carriers often characterize services with different addresses. By installing a new line, this will likely eliminate issues when trying to install the primary services. This can be even more important when considering new construction.