

CURE FOR THE COMMON CARRIER



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Telecom Tidbits</i>	2
<i>Mobility</i>	2
<i>Case Study</i>	3
<i>Budget 2010</i>	3

Special points of interest:

<i>Viewing Your 1st Bill</i>
<i>Collaboration</i>
<i>It's Budget Time Again!</i>
<i>Telecom Cost Savings</i>

WHEN THINGS GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT TIPS FOR TROUBLESHOOTING TELECOM OUTAGES

Most days, it is business as usual. You have dial tone; the Internet is working; and all your sites have connectivity. But, usually at the most inopportune time, there are those days when you should not have gotten out of bed. Don't panic! Instead, work in a systematic manner to reestablish your critical services. Through our many years of experience assisting organizations get back to business, we have identified some helpful steps.

Step 1: Identify the Problem

Before taking any steps, make sure that you understand the underlying issue. Are you having trouble making or receiving calls OR is it only long distance that is impacted? Can you get to the Internet OR are you having issues with e-mail? Is it an intermittent problem or are you hard down? Understanding the extent of the issue will save valuable time and money.

Step 2: Has Anything Changed?

About 10% of the time, recent changes made to internal systems or applications have unexpected impacts on communications services. Check to see if any changes were recently made.

Step 3: Look to the Sky

A quick prayer never hurts, but it is the weather we are referring to. Did you lose power overnight? Was there an extreme amount of rain? Note that severe weather can also impact remote locations. It may be a beautiful day, but your other sites may be impacted. Resetting your equipment can reestablish services in 1 out of 5 outages. Back to Business!

Step 4: Contact Your Carrier

When you lose connectivity, 45% of the time it is a network service issue. Prior to calling your carrier, it is important to have your account number, the services impacted and the respective circuit identification. When calling

in trouble tickets, get the name of the person assisting you, their call back number to check on status and the trouble ticket number. Remember when opening a trouble ticket, the carrier will often conduct tests that temporarily interrupt services.

Step 5: Contact Your Equipment Vendor

While you are waiting to hear back from the carrier also open a trouble ticket with your equipment vendor. In 15% of the cases, it is the equipment that has failed to some extent. Working in parallel can save critical time should it be determined that the carrier services test okay. Don't rely on the initial response from the carrier. It is not uncommon for the carrier to claim they tested positively when the problem is with their services. Keep the ticket open until service is back.

Helpful Hints:

- Have a documented contingency plan.
- Test your contingency plan.
- Keep your contact list updated.
- Identify a back up person
- Document the resolution for future use.

If you are asking where the other 10% falls, did you check to make sure you paid your bill? Or, it is not uncommon for there to be multiple points of failure that can add significant complexity to the resolution. No matter what the case, when things go bump in the night, it is critical that you attack the situation in a systematic approach to reestablish your critical telecom services.

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Your Cure for the Common Carrier

Telcom Tidbits

FROM ORION COMMUNICATIONS

The First Bill

One of the most dreaded moments related to telecom is opening the first bill after installing new services. You swear that you must be getting a bill for someone else's services. Below are some common challenges:

- **Pro-rated Charges:** Carriers bill in advance for most services. The 1st bill often includes a prorated amount to get services to the billing date.
- **Install Charges:** Whether accurate or not, the 1st bill often includes install and any one-time charges.
- **Incorrect Pricing:** Check to make sure that your pricing matches your contract. Sometimes rates are incorrect or contract term pricing has not been included.

Know Your Project Manager

Once the contract is signed, it is not uncommon for the sales rep to be less engaged in the day to day activities of the implementation. This is where the Project Manager becomes the point of contact to share the status of the project. It is important to identify this person early in the process as well as any escalation points that may exist. Of course, this can become more complex if there are multiple elements to your project including equipment, carrier network services and internal contacts. It can be advantageous to assign a single person to manage the overall activities related to your project, how it is progressing and adjustments that need to be made.

Collaboration

Sharing information with relevant parties such as customers, vendors and internal resources is becoming increasingly important. But, cost cutting has made getting on a plane less available. In fact, even getting in a car can waste an hour of productive time.

Many organizations are turning to web conferencing to establish a meeting of the minds. The ability to share documents has proven to be much more effective than traditional voice only conference calls. Teams can now collaborate, all working from the same document. And, this solution is much more cost effective than one might think especially when compared to traveling.

Did You Know ...

Carrier rate plans can change on a monthly basis. As competitive providers come out with new, more cost effective offerings, there is a leap-frogging effect. Just because you have an existing contract, it does not mean that you cannot make changes to your plans to reduce your costs. This also applies to your changing business environment. The plan you signed up for may have been the best option at the time, but there may be better offerings. Remember, if you don't ask, your carrier cannot say "no".

BUSINESS MOBILITY

STAYING CONNECTED IN AND OUT OF THE OFFICE

The ability to stay connected is no longer viewed as a luxury; it is a requirement for business.

- Why lose a customer because your competitor was more responsive?
- Is it acceptable for a critical project to be delayed because the bearer of the information was out of the office for a couple days?
- Could you be using idle time on the road more effectively than just grabbing a cup of coffee?

Mobility allows organizations to streamline operations, reduce costs, increase productivity and provide remote access, anywhere at anytime. Knowing that time is your most valuable, unrefundable assets, why waste it when so many cost effective solutions exist?

Do the Math ...

Sales: You expect a sales rep to generate \$250,000 of revenue per year which equates to \$100/hour based on a 50 hours per week of work time. If you can gain one hour per week of productivity, you have a 400% ROI.

Service: You charge \$125 per hour for on-site support with a two hour minimum. If you can schedule two additional jobs per month, you have a 500% ROI.

Executive: While waiting for a plane once a week, you could generate almost one extra week per year of productivity from each executive. What is that worth?

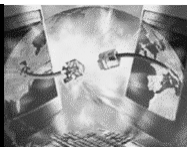
The days of having a cell phone and considering yourself connected are long gone. If you think you cannot afford the technology, maybe the question needs to be can you live without it?

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

GIRL SCOUTS WISCONSIN SOUTHEAST

Designed to fulfill the specific needs of girls, Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast (GSWISE) serves over 28,500 girls in Kindergarten through grade 12 in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, Washington and Waukesha counties, as well as the southern part of Ozaukee and eastern parts of Dodge and Jefferson counties. GSWISE provides a girl-centered quality leadership experience that meets the needs of girls in a fast-changing world and ensures a lifelong connection with Girl Scouting. Partnered with adult volunteers and community, and infused with the principles of inclusion and diversity, GSWISE is the premier organization for girls.

Challenge



Solution

Due to a shift in the structure of the Girl Scouts, that was once a series of county based organizations was realigned to a single institution which included much of Southeast Wisconsin. Resources from ten individual facilities including camps and administrative offices needed to be combined into one seamless topology to maximize productivity.

Challenges:

- Decentralized applications needed to be restructured into a centralized location.
- Callers needing to find mobile GSWISE contacts were being directed to redial to another location.
- Main applications were both tedious and slow.
- Telecom services were spread across several carriers which made on-going support time consuming.
- Critical information needed to be redundant should primary services be unavailable.

After exploring several network options, a telecom strategy was developed to meet the GSWISE objectives. Working with the telephone system and data networking vendor, Digicorp from Milwaukee, an MPLS network was implemented providing any-to-any connectivity between the locations. ISDN PRI was installed at two of the main locations to more effectively manage call flow using Direct Inward Dialing. High speed Internet was incorporated into the four regional offices that provided faster access speeds as well as network redundancy.

Outcomes:

- Fully integrated voice, data and Internet network to support the ten locations.
- Callers were now be redirected to the intended GSWISE contact independent of the location.
- Network redundancy providing both primary and secondary access for voice, Internet and data applications was incorporated.
- A baseline telecom cost savings was identified of 36% helped to fund the data network implementation.
- An on-going network management solution was developed to monitor and support the network.

IT'S BUDGET TIME AGAIN!

DON'T LET 2010 LOOK LIKE 2009

As we enter the 4th quarter, most organizations are planning 2010 with much more optimism than 2009. Although the economy is showing signs of a rebound, the outlook for the coming year is still grim for many. Although the costs of telecom services has a varying degree of impact on the overall bottom line depending on your business, cutting costs will always be primary objective and every dollar counts!

Let Orion Communications show you how we have helped our customers reduce monthly telecom expenses.

- Average savings of 28%
- Additional one-time credits for past overbilling
- Consolidate carriers to simplify billing

Act now and start saving before 2010 even starts!

Your Cure for the Common Carrier