

# CURE FOR THE COMMON CARRIER

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## *No LAN is an Island*

Sharing information with users across the office can be challenging enough, but collaborating between offices can be much tougher, especially as the distance between sites gets farther and farther apart. Then, there are all the factors to consider when selecting the ideal enterprise network for your organization such as monthly cost, reliability, redundancy and speed. How is anyone supposed to know what to do next?

### **The Basics**

Before you pick up the telephone to start calling carriers, there are some things to consider:

1. **Distance** – Some Wide Area Network (WAN) topologies have distance sensitive components. The farther the distance between sites, the greater the cost. And, as the distance gets greater, some regional carriers become less effective.
2. **Network Speed** –Your bandwidth capacity must match the needs of your business. A network with not enough data capacity will cause congestion and too much if a waste of money.
3. **Applications** – As Voice over IP (VoIP) becomes increasingly popular, it is important to note that the wrong network can create poor voice quality. Knowing how you are going to use the network overall is critical to designing your WAN.
4. **Redundancy** – Being down is no longer acceptable. Some network solutions provide for much more flexibility to maintain connectivity to critical applications.

### **The Network Options**

Although many WAN solutions are available in the marketplace, three distinct topologies are most common: Dedicated Circuits, Virtual Private Networks (VPN) and Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS).

**Dedicated Circuits** - A dedicated connection is established between any two locations providing a fixed bandwidth. Of the discussed options, this is the most mature solution and is easiest to manage as there are very few variables. For sites that are very close together, this can be the most cost effective solution. But, as the distance between sites and/or the number of sites increase, dedicated circuits become less cost effective.

**VPN** - This solution utilizes the public Internet as its main transport. Each location is provided access to the Internet and a firewall is introduced to drill a secure tunnel through the Internet between the respective locations. Commonly called “The Cloud”, the Internet allows any location to directly communicate with any other location without first having to access a central site. This solution can be very cost effective, especially for organizations with multiple smaller offices. VPN can also provide for a very cost effective back-up solution to other primary network solutions.

**MPLS** – This network solution is quickly becoming very popular, particularly for organizations with more than three locations. MPLS is distance insensitive. Similar to VPN, any site can communicate with any site, but MPLS is a private network compared to the public format of the Internet. Individual applications such as voice or video traffic can be prioritized within the MPLS network, allowing them to pass throughout the enterprise more effectively. This is called Class (or Quality) of Service.

The selection of the most appropriate WAN solution for your organization must account for both short and long term needs. This also extends to the selected carrier. The wrong selection can limit territorial expansion, capacity and future flexibility.

### **Other Considerations**

**Design** – No matter what which solution you select, make sure you allot enough time to plan and design your network. Changes can always be made after the network is up and running, but subsequent adjustments could impact your service.

**Managed Services** – Many WAN solutions have the option of including interface equipment such as routers and firewalls which are monitored by the carrier as a function of the service.

**Time Frames** – Depending on the number of locations, implementations can take between 60 days and 6 months. Rushing timeframes can often do more harm than good.

**Support** – If you need help, how responsive is your support going to be? Will they quickly respond to changes that you need or potential service outages? Call into the support center as a test.

There are so many options when considering a wide area network solution for your organization. The right network solution combined with the correct carrier can provide a stable enterprise from which your organization can grow and prosper. The wrong choices can create endless headaches. At Orion Communications, we have worked with organizations of all sizes to help them develop the most ideal solution.

ORION COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

10850 W. Park Place, Suite 220, Milwaukee, WI 53224  
(414)359-2500 [www.orionnow.com](http://www.orionnow.com)

**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.

## The Mobile Workforce

Being strapped to your desk is no longer an option. Whether you are roaming the office or traveling the country, staying in touch is essential. The alternative can mean losing the deal or even the customer all together.

### Accessibility Tools:

- **Data Cards** – No more need to search for a hot spot at the local coffee shop. Work wherever at solid connectivity speeds.
- **Follow Me** – Forward your calls to your cell phone when you are away from your desk. You can even hide the function only sharing it with those whom you really need to communicate.
- **Smart Phones** – Take the office with you right to your handset. View files, read e-mail and search the web.
- **GPS** – Know where everyone is throughout the day allowing you to allocate your team more effectively saving both time and travel costs.
- **Navigation** – No matter where you are, you can find where you need to go quickly and easily.

One missed call or e-mail can make the difference between making your year and just getting by.

## \$4,300,000

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

- **Orion has conducted 134 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 26%.**
- **The largest billing customer was \$175,000 per month and 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.

## Cell Phone Savings

In the past, changing your cell phone plan meant signing up for another two years. This is not necessarily the case anymore. Now, you can take advantage of savings immediately without having to sign your life away ... AGAIN.

## The Small Print

You have met with the vendors, gathered proposals and are now ready to make your decision on the telecom provider to be used for the next three years. Before you sign the contracts, there are a few important steps:

1. **Compare Numbers** – Make sure the numbers on the proposal match those on the contract.
2. **Understand Liabilities** – What happens if you end the contract early? Is there termination if you move? What if you face a business downturn?
3. **The End of the Term** – Does the agreement auto renew? Do you revert to higher, casual rates? How much notice must you provide?

Knowing your contract can save you great pain later on. If you are not clear on the terms, make sure to ask.

## teleTRACK+ from Orion

Reducing your line charges or your rate per minute can lower your monthly telecom costs, but it is often the soft costs of telecommunications management that can really add up. It is not uncommon to sit on hold for an hour trying to resolve a billing or service issue. Then, you can wait endlessly for someone to get back to you. Orion's teleTRACK+ is a service that can off-load these challenges to our team so that your team can stay focused on running your business. And, by proactively monitoring monthly billing, the cost savings we can find will most likely fund this service. You get rid of the headaches and still save some money each month.

**Design Your Own Support Plan** – Time & Materials, Scope of Work, Monthly Rates and Block of Time options.

## You Are Not Alone.

There are others out there like you. Those that don't like the telephone company. If you know someone that needs help, show them the way to Orion Communications.