

CURE FOR THE COMMON CARRIER



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Special points of interest:

- Reducing Telecom Costs
- Network Redundancy
- Improved Support
- Contract Management

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

TRENDS FOR 2010

As the calendar flips, many organizations are hoping that only the positive results of 2009 extend into the new year. Having been involved in planning meetings with many of our customers, Orion has compiled some common next steps relating to telecom services that will hopefully stop past trends in their tracks.

Cost Reduction

The #1 request from our customers has been how to reduce costs without impacting productivity, customer service and reliability. They know that they are paying too much for the services they are receiving, but the tedious process of evaluating options combined with the fear of downtime has limited their motivation to explore the next steps. The fact is a periodic review of telecom costs can result in a 28% reduction in these monthly costs.

Business Continuity

Although telecom services are generally reliable, an outage to voice, data and/or Internet services can be very costly. Customers receive busy signals while trying to place orders. Internal user productivity drops exponentially when access to vital resources is limited. When e-mail and access to the Internet is halted, the ability to conduct business also stops. Many organizations are searching for solutions to maintain connectivity while developing internal processes to expedite the reestablishment of primary services should there be an outage.

Improved Customer Service

Without customers, most of us are out of business. Sure, most customers are looking for

lower prices, but the ease of conducting business is often a critical element in the decision matrix. Improving call flow allows your customers to more efficiently access your resources more quickly. Improvements to your web site can more accurately represent your services to the needs of your customers. Faster, reliable bandwidth can help you support your customers in a more timely manner. Small adjustments to your infrastructure can have a significant impact on the service your customers experience when working with your organization.

Improved Systems

Due to the economic downturns, many organizations have cut projects from previous years' budgets because they were deemed too expensive. These projects such as new servers, an upgraded telephone system or a more efficient infrastructure have once again aged another year increasing liability and extending inefficiencies. It is time again to reevaluate the costs of not continuing with these projects.

At Orion, we work with customers on a daily basis with similar challenges. We know money is tight. We also are aware that telecom, although merely a transport for more critical, business impacting applications, is vital to the survival of any organization. Whether you are looking to reduce costs, improve reliability or enhance customer experience, let us put our resources to work for you.

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Your Cure for the Common Carrier

Telcom Tidbits

FROM ORION COMMUNICATIONS

New Promotions

Like most organizations, telecom providers are looking to start fast out of the gate. Therefore, there are many cost effective promotions being offered. In addition, carriers are more apt to negotiate should the specific needs of your organization not directly match the promos being offered. When working with your carriers, don't accept their first offer so willingly. Options geared towards a follow up offer are often available. In addition, do your diligence. If you don't see what you like from one carrier, ask another. Finally, look to hybrid solutions from multiple carriers. Combining services can provide lower costs as well as greater redundancy.

Inventory Your Features

Many telephone companies bundle features with their lines that can provide significant value such as caller ID and call volume packages. Although these promo packages may reduce your costs, nothing comes for free. Make sure to evaluate what features you need. Eliminating these features can save you even more.

Also, should you change your service package with a carrier, these once free features can now incur monthly costs. They are often bundled into the monthly costs and difficult to identify. A little extra effort on your part can help to minimize your monthly costs and make sure you are not paying for services not being utilized.

Your Term is Over

Do you know what happens to your contract once your term has been completed? We have worked with a number of customers recently that were needlessly surprised by what happened at the end of their term.

- **Auto Renew** ~ Contracts can renew for an extended term up to the total length of the original contract.
- **Non Contractual Rates** ~ Some carriers will revert to a tariff rate which can be significantly higher than the contractual rate.

It is also important to note that many carriers require written advanced notice of your intents or your relationship with the carrier could extend per their terms.

Did You Know ...

Carriers identify the start and end dates of their contracts differently. Some are based on the customer signature date or even the carrier co-signature date. Others consider the installation date as the start date. Some carriers even use the billing start date. Understanding when your term starts and ends can save you endless challenges and costly potential termination charges.

SIP TRUNKING

VOICE OVER THE INTERNET

Over the past few years, an increasing number of telecom providers have introduced a new delivery method for voice communications, Session Initiated Protocol or SIP. In fact, if you have recently implemented new service, you may be using a form of the technology and not even know it.

SIP trunks integrate voice, data and/or Internet on the same access to your location. The access facility most often used is a T-1 which dynamically allocates the respective traffic, prioritizing voice traffic to maintain quality. As voice traffic increases, less bandwidth is available for your data and/or Internet traffic.

The solution can be very cost effective for customers at many levels, but a comprehensive analysis should be completed as the value of this solution significantly varies for each customer.

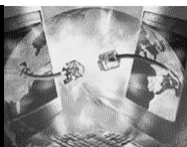
Some Thoughts ...

- SIP can be delivered as an Ethernet connection to your telephone system although traditional PRI, T-1 or POTS integration is highly recommended.
- The voice is often compressed compared to traditional deliver methods allowing the ability to increase the concurrent calls on a single facility. This compression can negatively impact fax and modem communications.
- It is important to understand the capabilities of your SIP provider. The offerings can differ significantly, some offering more value than others.
- SIP trunking is not available everywhere although the footprint is increasing all the time.

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

REGIONAL TRUCKING COMPANY

Challenge



Solution

Although their telecom services worked and the original solutions made sense, changes to their environment over the years left them with an outdated, costly telecom infrastructure. Small adjustments that were requested to increase productivity would further increase costs.

Challenges:

- The locations of the customer that originally had similar needs now needed to be adjusted to improve site productivity.
- Business continuity plans need to be adjusted to support their changing environment.
- The customer required greater Internet bandwidth for their central site and more control over remote sites.
- User mobility and resource availability needed to be enhanced to increase overall productivity.
- Monthly costs were too high in comparison to their current requirements.
- Although services were deemed to be reliable, the customer required more consultative engagement with their telecom vendors to ensure they were getting the greatest value from their telecom infrastructure and maintain costs.

After carefully evaluating the needs of our customer, Orion recommended a hybrid telecom solution combining the strengths of different carriers to improve the overall value of the network infrastructure.

Outcomes:

- Increased available Internet bandwidth by 200%.
- Adjusted available data network bandwidth to improve performance at specific sites.
- Engaged the telephone system vendor to improve user accessibility to vital resources when users were out of the office.
- Updated the network services inventory and adjusted the telecom contingency plans to improve network reliability and design a back up plan.
- Scheduled periodic planning meetings with the customer combined with quarterly telecom bill audits to manage business change and maintain telecom costs.
- All these network improvements were completed while still saving the customer \$7,200 per month (45% reduction) over their original telecom costs.

DATA NETWORK REDUNDANCY

LOOKING TO THE SKY FOR BANDWIDTH

As data and Internet communications become increasingly important, many organizations are looking for solutions to improve network reliability. Redundant telecom networks are often the solution, but still rely on the last mile of access to be provided by the telephone company. A strategically placed back hoe, flooding or a local power outage can easily make the primary and redundant networks unavailable.

A solution to which many organizations are turning is the incorporation of wireless networking including cellular data or line of site wireless. Depending on the physical location of the site(s), remarkably high bandwidth options can be made available.

It is important to note that cellular solutions are often limited to the structure of the building to be supported. The cellular penetration can be hindered by some building materials and external antennas may be required to circumvent the structure.

Line of site wireless may also require an external antenna, but, once service is established, an idle connection can be implemented with the ability to increase bandwidth should primary data or Internet services become unavailable.

These solutions are not available for every organization based on physical location, but, for many, the solution provides significant bandwidth options for a very reasonable price.

Your Cure for the Common Carrier