9 High-Value Telecom & IT Tips

Tangible Ways to Save Cost and Enhance Capabilities

Consider these facts:

- Telecom costs are the third-biggest expense for most businesses, yet 85% of companies do not audit their bills well before paying them.
- On average, 14% of telecom bills are erroneous.
- US companies with contracts that are over two years old spend 20%–35% more per year on voice/data than those that recently negotiated contracts.
- Research shows that cloud computing can cut costs from 39%–80%, depending on the situation and implementation.
- An increasingly mobile business environment gets more dependent on smartphones, tablets and other advanced data devices every year – they will reach 50% of mobile devices by 2014.

These and other many other facts highlight an array of opportunities businesses have to control their telecom and IT costs, improve efficiency and utilize new and constantly evolving capabilities to compete more effectively. Following are nine telecom and IT tips that businesses can use to optimize their telecom and IT.

#1 – Phone Line Audit

Businesses that have not taken a good look at their overall phone service lately could be incurring a lot of unnecessary cost. This is especially true for mid- to large-size companies that have numerous lines of different types in different locations. As business needs change, new lines are added for phones, faxes, modems, credit card processers, postage machines and other purposes. But all too often, lines are not cancelled when they are no longer needed. People leave, companies downsize, new technologies make lines unnecessary and other changes occur. A complete phone line audit – landlines and wireless – may reveal serious savings that can be realized from elimination of legacy lines. Such an audit can also identify opportunities to utilize services more efficiently, which can also reduce expenditures. [Read more](#).

#2 – Upgrade to Fiber

Fiber optic cable offers many advantages over copper that enhance IT and communications capabilities, while reducing long-term costs. The most significant issues for many businesses are in the "last mile" of their service. Running fiber cable in the local loop – the connection between the carrier's central office and the business – provides extensive scalability of the data connection that can be achieved much faster and far more cost-effectively than with copper. Changes, additions and upgrades can be implemented in a fraction of the time and for less expense. There are many other advantages, as well, ranging from speed/bandwidth, signal integrity and uptime/reliability to security, durability and advantages, fiber must be

available close enough to the business to economically connect. The cost of running new fiber over a long distance can be prohibitive. Read more.

#3 – Conferencing & Collaboration

In a business environment where overwhelming demands, competing priorities and increasing mobilization are driving people apart, new telecom conferencing capabilities can bring companies, customers and others together, while enhancing efficiency and reducing costs. The extensive benefits range from stronger relationships and better service to increased efficiency, faster response times and less travel expense. There is also an increasingly important environmental benefit. Custom services can be designed to include everything from basic conference calling to web conferencing, video conferencing and unified communications, depending on the business's needs and budget. This enables companies to work more efficiently and economically. Read more.

#4 – Outsourced Invoice Management

Businesses that have not taken a good look at their telecom invoices lately should do so. They might be surprised at what they find. First of all, these bills are probably a lot longer than they think, with many sections for individual numbers and different kinds of charges. They will also find a complex series of expense codes that are mystifying to anyone who does not work with them every day. For most people, it is virtually impossible to tell if the bill is accurate or if there are erroneous or even fraudulent charges included. Then consider that a mid-size business with multiple locations may have dozens of such invoices to review. It is no wonder that 85% do not do an adequate audit of their telecom bills on a monthly basis. It is very likely that most companies could save as much as 35% or more if they had a knowledgeable professional do the invoice reviews. An economical, time and hassle-saving solution is to outsource invoice management to a specialist. Read more.

#5 – Virtual Desktop

On average, companies spend $3 in operational expenses for every $1 of PC hardware they purchase. These expenditures go to provisioning, setup, maintenance, updating, backup, security and other items that are essential for effective IT management. Beyond the cost, overburdened IT departments find it difficult keeping up, while end users typically lack the time, expertise and discipline necessary to effectively manage their own PCs. For many companies, hosted virtual desktops (VDI) offer significant cost savings, improved efficiency, enhanced security, a longer useful life for PCs and a superior user experience. Put simply, VDI moves everything on a user's desktop to a cloud-based server. By doing so, almost any basic device with Internet access can function as a powerful computing and communications tool. Because everything resides in a secure private cloud, there are almost no security concerns and each desktop

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#6 – Shared Wireless Data Service Plan

Changes in the way customers use their mobile communication devices have caused carriers to rethink their voice, text and data plans. Traditionally, the amount of voice minutes was a driving factor, but now, data is king. There is a growing trend of offering unlimited voice minutes and text messaging and basing the plan on the amount of data the customer uses. A key benefit of these new plans is that they allow several users (up to 10 for most) to share a pool of data. This nearly eliminates wasted data and reduces the amount a group of users or devices must purchase. Verizon Wireless's new Share Everything plan is a good example. It can reduce wireless cost a lot – in some cases, up to 50% or more. It all depends on how the service is currently set up. It starts with a base rate per device, and then the user chooses the amount of data to share with up to 10 users/devices. Regardless of the choices, it includes unlimited talk minutes and text, picture and video messages. Mobile Hotspots are also included on all capable devices. Read more.

#7 – Replace Remote Call Forwarding Lines with SIP Trunking

SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) Trunking is clearly the future of voice services delivery. SIP Trunking is an Internet-based version of POTS telephone service. It uses VoIP to connect a business to the PSTN (public switched telephone network), eliminating the use of aging POTS systems, copper cable and TDM switches. Key benefits of SIP Trunking include number portability, cloud-based capabilities and cost effectiveness. Because the switching occurs in the cloud through Internet connections, numbers can easily and quickly be ported to most locations without the cost of traditional call forwarding. There are many other benefits and some real limitations that are important to understand. Read more.

#8 – Watch for Hidden Smartphone Fees

Today's smartphone will almost certainly be preloaded with applications that the user did not request. Many are free, useful, convenient and even necessary to get the most out of the device, but some are not free, and the user may not want them. Many have "free trials" that must be cancelled after the trial period (if they are accepted) or it will automatically convert to monthly fees. Users should check out all their apps to make sure they are not paying for ones they and the business do not want. "Slacker Radio," "Application City I.D." and "NFL Mobile" are several examples of these pre-loaded applications. These fees are typically small, but they can add up to big money across an organization. Read more.

#9 – Beware of Phishing

Phishing is when a perpetrator fraudulently attempts to obtain financial or other information

from Internet users, typically by sending an e-mail that looks like one from a legitimate organization, but contains a link to a fake website that replicates a real one. Phishing attacks have increased from over 25,000 in July of 2011 to nearly 60,000 in July of 2012 according to RSA, The Security Division of EMC. A growing number of businesses are being hurt by this illegal deception. This underscores the importance of being cautious when responding to emails that request confidential information. Telecom customers should be aware that recently, fake Verizon Wireless bills have been emailed that look nearly identical to real invoices. Take precautions. Read more.

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