

Outsourced Wireless Telecom Management

How to Reduce Costs, Free Up Staff and Optimize Wireless Services

Up to 85% of a typical enterprise's telecom bills are paid without auditing according to the Aberdeen Group. The Gartner Group estimates that up to 14% of those telecom invoices are erroneous. This wasted expense is startling when you consider that telecom costs are the second largest indirect and third largest overall expense for businesses according to the IDC Research Group. Invoice errors and overbillings, however, are just the beginning. Add in the costs of administrative processing, reconciling errors, tracking usage and more. Then there are the indirect expenses of tying up valuable IT staff and other personnel who could be focusing on higher priorities. In addition, keeping up with new plans, devices and opportunities to optimize your telecom is more than a fulltime job – so it doesn't get done. How do you address these overwhelming challenges? An outsourced solution might be right for your company. In this discussion we will focus on one part of the solution: outsourced wireless telecom management.

WHAT IS OUTSOURCED WIRELESS TELECOM MANAGEMENT?

Outsourcing telecom management is defined and offered in a variety of ways. Some take a broad approach with TEM (Telecom Expense Management), which is the comprehensive

management of technology, processes, policies and people related to telecom – voice, data, wireless and Internet. Those that focus only on the wireless component offer Mobility Lifecycle Management, which addresses expense reduction and control throughout the lifecycle from contract negotiation to service termination. Others provide WEM (Wireless Expense Management), which is usually limited to software or cloud-based tools and does not provide any outsourced management services.

To avoid confusion and better convey how these services are delivered, we utilize the term Managed Solutions as the umbrella service and Wireless Managed Solutions as the mobile subset. In another discussion Voice and Data Management Solutions will be addressed.

The outsourced components of a complete Wireless Managed Solutions service should include:

Invoice Management – complete analysis, coding and error resolution.

- Monthly Invoice Screening – for errors, over-billing, usage and other tracking.
- Coding – entry of bills by general ledger code, account and other criteria.
- Billing Corrections – proactive error, dispute and credit resolution.
- Rate Verification – to check for accurate billing.
- Approvals – to ensure that usage, purchases and transactions are authorized.



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- Usage Tracking – to determine if current plans are optimal on a monthly basis.

Contract Management & Negotiation – to secure and maintain optimal contracts.

- Contract Reviews – regular analysis to determine if contracts can be improved.
- Renewal Notifications – advanced alerts for each contract.
- Plan Selection – review competitive plans to recommend the best options.
- Carrier Negotiations – negotiate plans and services from a position of knowledge and strength.
- Compliance – ensure that carriers are complying with contract terms and conditions.
- Contract Access – provide 24x7x365 secure online access to contract information through a customized portal.
- Renegotiation – periodically review contracts and renegotiate with carriers to optimize service and minimize cost.

Inventory Management – provide information about all devices and numbers.

- Device Database – create and maintain a complete inventory of every cell phone, smartphone, modem and other devices.
- Complete Information – for each device, including phone number, user, plans, contract terms, location, etc.

- Inventory Updates – revise the database whenever a device is added, removed or transferred or when any information about the device or user is changed.
- Inventory Access – provide 24x7x365 secure online access to the inventory through a customized portal.

Help Desk – real-time support configured for your company's needs.

- Dedicated Connection - customized help desk email address and toll-free number.
- Availability – the hours and days your users need, up to 24x7x365.
- Service Management – procurement, upgrades, changes, temporary suspensions and disconnects
- Comprehensive Support.
 - Device Not Working.
 - Voice Mail Problems.
 - Email Connectivity Issues.
 - Battery & Accessory Problems.
 - Other device and service-related issues.
- Trouble Ticket Management – issue escalation and resolution.
 - Proactive – tracking, follow-up and status reports.
 - Information Access and Updates – to email and a secure, Web-based portal.
 - Replacement Assistance.
 - ▲ Damaged/Warranty.
 - ▲ Damaged/Out of Warranty.
 - ▲ Lost/Stolen.



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Management Reports – for control, decision-making and planning.

- Customized – for your company’s specific needs.
- Focused – to highlight key metrics and targeted issues.
- Custom Configured.
 - Monthly Savings Summary – by location and type of service.
 - Monthly and YTD Spend Reports - by location and type of service.
 - Exception Reports – to identify and address issues.
 - Other Information – you need for your organization.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WIRELESS MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS?

The many benefits companies can derive from Wireless Managed Solutions are inherent in the points outlined above. Together, they make a compelling case for reducing costs, freeing up staff for other priorities and optimizing mobile communications. Following are some key points that executives or managers responsible for finance, administration, IT and operations should consider.

Cost Saving

The bottom-line question for most companies is, “Will outsourced wireless telecom management reduce my costs?” The answer depends on several

factors, but in most cases, it is a definitive “Yes.” The three key considerations are:

- 1) Have you implemented a proactive invoice management system?
- 2) Have you optimized your wireless plans and devices for your organization?
- 3) Do you have an effective wireless support and management structure?

If you cannot answer yes to all these questions or if you are unsure, it is very likely that you could achieve significant cost savings from outsourcing your wireless telecom management – perhaps much more than you might think. Cost savings result from the following in most cases:

Invoice Management – Outsourcing the laborious, time-consuming monthly task of finding and correcting billing errors and inappropriate charges saves most businesses an average of 25-35% on their invoices, plus indirect costs related to staff time.

Plan Monitoring – The wireless telecom industry has changed a lot from just a few years ago. New devices and technology have changed users’ behavior, shifting them to far greater data usage and texting. There is also more global business being transacted, which has elevated international calls and data transfers. As a result, wireless carriers have been – and will continue to – revise their plans, with an emphasis on eliminating “all-you-can-eat” options. Staying on top of these changes is critical for getting



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the lowest cost. It is important to know that you can change your plan anytime and as often as you want within your contract period without being required to extend the contract.

Most businesses do not have the staff time to stay current with all the changes, options and opportunities to get a better cost. Outsourcing partners do.

Minute and Data Usage – Keeping track of how your people use their minutes, bandwidth and devices (most probably have more than one) is a huge task – one you and your staff probably do not have time for. An outsourcing partner can monitor usage and provide reports that flag excessive consumption and costs. They can also monitor which numbers are most frequently called and include them in special plans like Verizon Wireless’s “Friends & Family” and AT&T’s “A-List”, where calls to the top 10 numbers are not charges against plan minutes.

Device Procurement – Mid-plan replacements and upgrades often slip through without review. Outsourcing can handle the procurement and approval process for new devices, reducing the amount of inappropriate expenditures.

International Travel – If you have people frequently traveling abroad, they need international voice and data plans. These are very expensive compared to domestic plans. You can save significant cost by switching staff to international plans only for the

time they are traveling, and then switching back when they return. This takes time and coordination that most managers cannot afford. An outsourcing partner can make it happen promptly and reliably.

Freeing Up Staff Time

These days, almost everyone is doing more with less in business. This is especially true during a tough economy. Existing staff is stretched to the limit just keeping up with essential business functions and core management activities. No one really has time for the time-consuming tasks related to telecom expense management. Outsourcing your wireless telecom management will provide significant relief for several areas:

IT Department – With technology advancing at breakneck speed, IT staffs are running at capacity to implement and manage the systems and hardware businesses need to run smoothly and remain competitive. Staying on top of all the new wireless plans, devices and opportunities is virtually impossible. Your outsourcing partner specializes in knowing about the latest changes and how to leverage them for your company.

Administrative Department – Thoroughly reviewing all of your telecom invoices can mean analyzing hundreds of pages every month, trying to find billing errors and inappropriate charges. Even if you can find the time, you probably do not have the expertise to catch all the mistakes. Then there is the



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time (and frustration) it takes to resolve the disputes with the carriers. Outsourcing partners have the knowledge, time and experience with the carriers to get the job done.

Management – As an executive or manager, your plate is certainly already full. Studying bills, plans, offers and other complex information is most likely not your top priority. Yet effective management of your telecom expenses could create real savings. An outsourcing partner can do all the legwork and analysis then provide you with the best actions to take and options from which to choose.

Wireless Optimization

In addition to saving cost and enabling your people to be more productive, outsourcing your wireless telecom management can ensure that you are taking advantage of the most current devices and capabilities available. Technical advances and service changes occur much more often than your contract renewals. Yet that is the only time many businesses ever consider revising their wireless capabilities. You could be losing out on a competitive advantage that could really make a difference. An outsourcing partner can keep you apprised of such opportunities.

User Behavior

If your company has wireless user policies, you know how hard it is to determine if they are being followed. It is simply unrealistic for most managers

to wade through mountains of bills and reports to see how each person is using their phones, smartphones, tablets, modems and other devices. An outsourcing partner can track and analyze usage, then provide a concise report with flags of questionable behavior. When employees know that their wireless usage is being monitored they are more likely to comply with policies and responsibly use costly features like 411 and texting.

SAVINGS AND COSTS

The amount you can save from Wireless Managed Solutions will vary based on your organization's characteristics, but it is usually 25-35% of your wireless monthly bills. The factors discussed in this article all affect your ultimate savings. The initial savings – those during the first months and year – will be the most dramatic because there are usually major improvements to be made.

It is important to note, however, that wireless telecom optimization is not an event. It is an ongoing process that identifies and realizes savings every month or billing cycle. While increases in annual savings in subsequent years will probably not be as big in year 1, it will still be significant – much greater than the cost of the management services. The best

metric for consideration is the cumulative savings since the program began, balanced with increases in usage, devices and capabilities.



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The cost of Wireless Managed Solutions is specific to each company's situation. In most cases, it is a set fee based on factors including:

- Number of Phones and Devices.
- Number of Carriers and Invoices
- Complexity of Reporting
- Level of Support – business hours, 24x7x365, etc.

With this information, an outsourcing partner can provide a quote. In some situations, the cost will be based on a percentage of savings, but that is being seen less often.

CONCLUSION

In an era of increasing specialization and outsourcing, Wireless Managed Solutions is filling an important role for many companies. The complexity and sheer volume of telecom invoices, plans, options, devices and other information has made it impractical – if not impossible – for all but the largest companies to minimize their expenditures, while optimizing their capabilities. One of the most attractive aspects of outsourcing telecom expense management is that the cost comes out of the savings. Check it out – before your next contract expiration.

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