



Finding the Right Fit

Five criteria for evaluating telecom management tools

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It's the start of a new fiscal year. Your annual IT budget has been approved, and you have commenced your search for a telecom management software that will help you better navigate the treacherous waters of today's telecom environment, and provide you with the tools to effectively manage an otherwise unmanageable yet important enterprise expense. How do you select the right tool?

When selecting a telecom management platform, the Enterprise Manager must evaluate the quality of the platform and its provider, applying the same methodologies leveraged for choosing any enterprise-level application, to ensure the long term benefits to the company and its users.

Among the most important factors is the presentation layer. Usability, without a compromise in feature or functionality, is critical to ensuring that the telecom management platform is not easily abandoned because "it's too complex," or only addresses managing a portion of the telecom lifecycle.

When evaluating tools for managing telecom, you should consider the following 5 criteria:

1. PLATFORM INDEPENDENCE:

With the push toward a distributed enterprise (regional offices, remote employees), cloud-based solutions have the upper-hand over locally installed applications. A web-based or Software-as-a-Service solution affords clients the ability to access the information universally, and gain the benefits of hardware independence and instant access to software enhancements and improvements. An advanced telecom management software solution is one that offers users universal access, and is network and platform independent.

2. USER-CENTRIC INFORMATION:

In order for a software application to ensure user productivity, it must make the information that matters to a user easily accessible. A productive telecom management software solution provides reports that are pertinent to the user trying to access that information, whether the user is someone in the Accounting Department looking for invoice and spend-data, or a user from the IT Department looking for inventory and order information. If an organization has regional managers responsible for managing regional costs, the right software solution should narrow any reports, spend, inventory, orders or tickets down to the pertinent offices in each specific region, making it more accessible for that manager, and eliminate the need for wading through unnecessary information.

3. COMPLIANCE:

Easy access across the web has great benefits. But web-enabled telecom management software must meet the minimum requirements for supporting an enterprise's security practices. From encrypted access and data models that meet regulations like HIPPA requirements; to supporting hard passwords and module-level access; the system must offer the required flexibility and robustness.



4. INTELLIGENT REPORTING:

A telecom management application acts as a central repository of telecom expenses across multiple carriers, products and locations. The Enterprise Manager, with an already full plate, still has to analyze the data and identify areas to optimize spend.. A powerful application is one that provides true Business Intelligence, in the form of actionable tasks that can generate immediate hard and/or soft savings.

5. MORE THAN EXPENSE:

Many organizations struggle with generating reports about telecom, whether they're spend or operationally-related, due to the disparate systems that the carriers provide, and the lack of a centralized environment or tools. An efficient telecom management solution is one that addresses the management of the entire telecom lifecycle. Whether it's an IT Engineer looking at a list of inventory with chronic trouble tickets; or an Accounting Manager looking for cost trends by cost center; the solution must support flexibility in providing information across data points from all carriers, products, and locations; and complete visibility across every aspect of managing a telecom environment, from sourcing and implementation, to support, billing and cost allocation.

Obviously, price is a factor in any software purchase. The established pricing model of telecom management is to charge a licensing fee for the software. Unfortunately, this often does not make economic sense for the middle market. For example, if you spend \$50,000 in telecom, you don't want to pay \$5,000 in software to manage it. Luckily, a new model has emerged that works for the middle market - heavily subsidized software licenses (and in some cases subsidized professional services as well) - funded by the telecom expense management firm taking over the management and distribution of the carrier services using wholesale agreements.

Under this model, the management firm takes over the distribution of carrier services and passes along the savings achieved through its aggregate buying power. With the management firm's fees more than offset by the savings provided, the midsize enterprise receives all the benefits of the software and professional services with no "out of pocket" costs.

vCom Solutions revolutionizes the way enterprises manage their entire telecom lifecycle. vCom customers gain control over inventory, expenses and carrier relationships, achieving better business intelligence that drives profitability. vCom's Telecom Management as a Service (TMaaS) solution includes a suite of cloud-based telecom management software tools, complemented by a full portfolio of professional services.

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