



The Dimensions of Telecom Lifecycle Management

**Is Your Telecom Management Solution
Enabling You to Effectively Manage a
Key Business Expense?**

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At last!! Your Executive Management team has conceded the fact that: managing a highly evolving and poorly-supported yet critical part of the business like telecom, without the right tools or expertise, is akin to dumping money down the drain. You've been tasked with identifying a telecom management solution that helps you effectively manage this key business expense. Now what?

When an Enterprise makes the leap to explore a telecom management service offering, to solve a well documented and universal business problem, many factors play into making the right decision, atop these being cost and implementation. Unlike the world of Fortune 1000, the options for a mid-enterprise are limited; unfortunately, there aren't off-the-shelf solutions, and the solutions available to the Fortune 1000 are simply not affordable.

Most solutions include a software application of some sort. Some solutions may also include access to some form of professional services. The right Telecom Management solution must provide visibility, control, efficiency, simplicity and savings. In order to leverage the solution for Telecom Life-cycle Management (TLM™), or end to end telecom environment management, it must fill all the gaps that make telecom management so difficult.

There are seven required elements for a Telecom Management solution to enable total telecom environment management. We call these elements: The Dimensions of Telecom Life-cycle Management. They are:

1. Inventory Management

One of the biggest challenges in managing telecom is the inability to effectively identify inventory across the Enterprise:

- a. **Sufficient Detail for a Tech:** The Telecom Management platform needs to offer a sophisticated inventory management module that provides sufficient detail for an IT or Telephony technician to perform their job. A circuit's billing telephone number (BTN) and product category is not sufficient; it must include details like Local Exchange Carrier (LEC) circuit ID, binding post information, circuit signaling, and associated inventory (like DIDs, routers), to list a few.
- b. **Inventory by "Fill-in-the-Blank:"** Equally important is the ability to view inventory by product, location, cost center, and carrier.
- c. **Inventory History:** The ability to easily tie inventory back to associated trouble tickets makes it easier to identify and pinpoint chronic issues.
- d. **The "Nth" Degree of Detail:** Some sophisticated Telecom Management solutions offer the ability to tie the inventory back to a cost center or even an employee, which not only helps the organization answer the always-ellusive question: "How much am I spending on telecom per employee;" it also enables HR organizations to manage all telecom assets (cell phone, calling card, conferencing card, etc.) associated with an employee, especially when an employee separation occurs.

2. Spend Management

At the top of the list of challenges in managing a telecom environment is the inability to determine where



businesses spend their money. The carriers have made it progressively more difficult to read invoices and identify charges or tie them back to telecom services. Furthermore, no carrier, even the largest, can offer a single invoice across an Enterprise's entire footprint, or the wide range of telecom products it uses. The Telecom Management platform needs to offer sophistication in providing a clear and concise spend management engine:

- a. **Drillable Reports:** The spend management engine needs to provide reports that give the ability to look at spend at a macro level, while also affording visibility at the product, location, cost center, and carrier level. The application needs to allow for drilling down to the lowest possible level, charges at the line, feature or call level.
- b. **Exportable Reports:** No matter how sophisticated a reporting engine may be, users still want the ability to manipulate the data, and therefore, should be able to export reports to common formats (Excel, CSV, etc.).
- c. **Trend Analysis:** Having simple and clear monthly spend-reports is important; but equally important is the ability to analyze trends and fluctuations in spend over a period of time, to easily determine causes of concern. The ability to quickly determine percentage change, or flag non-recurring charges that impact monthly invoices, are necessary to gaining control over spend.
- d. **Assurance Testing:** A sophisticated Telecom Expense Management system enables users to establish thresholds for flagging outliers and fluctuations, and offers reports that automatically provide the user savings opportunities, while eliminating manual analysis and taking advantage of intelligent reporting.

3. Activity Management

One of the pitfalls of Telecom Management solutions is the quality and accuracy of the data, which is dependent on when the data was entered. It's very easy for IT departments to keep using whatever systems they're accustomed to using, and forget or omit to update the Telecom Management software. A complete solution is one that enables live activity management:

- a. **Move, Add, Change and Disconnect Orders:** The power of a Telecom Management solution is recognized when one can go beyond inventory tracking; the ability to leverage the solution to effectively project-manage telecom implementations, and centrally document all communications with all carriers, regardless of product or site, can provide true productivity. Tying the orders back to the inventory can save the organization time down the road, if any detail about the implementation process was called into question.
- b. **Trouble Tickets:** The ability to track all trouble tickets across multiple providers regardless of product, in a centralized system, is one of the most important benefits of a complete Telecom Management solution. Being able to reference those tickets for chronic issues, and being able to document ticket resolution, provide additional advantages and ease the ongoing support challenges.
- c. **Account and carrier inquiries and disputes:** In addition to systems for tracking orders and trouble tickets, having a centralized platform for tracking all other carrier billing and account inquiries, and carrier disputes, completes the picture and provides a holistic view of all activities impacting the telecom environment.



4. Invoice Management

A key function of any Telecom Management solution is invoice consolidation through a centralized service. In order for such a function to actually save customers time and money, it has to accomplish three objectives:

- a. **Normalization:** The carrier invoices have to be normalized in an easy to understand and interpret format. One carrier might call one service X, while another carrier might call it Y. The value of a Telecom Management solution is to take all the guess-work out of the task of processing and approving invoices, and normalizing the nomenclature is the first step.
- b. **Managing all the Spend:** A view into a portion of Spend (wireline only) is an ineffective means of managing Spend as a whole. The power of a Telecom Management solution is to give the organization a complete picture of anything that falls under the umbrella of Telecom Spend.
- c. **Invoice Approval:** For multi-tier Enterprise organizations, having an invoice approval workflow can help expedite the processing of invoice payment, while providing a means of documentation.

5. Resource & Information Management

Automation. It is estimated that the cost of processing Enterprise telecom invoices is \$80 per invoice. This conservative figure includes the time for invoice review by an IT representative; the GL-coding of the invoice; the review of cost allocation by an accounting representative; the data entry of the charges in the Accounts Payables system; the issuance of payment; and reconciliation of payments made. Implementing a Telecom Management solution must address the inefficiencies associated with having to go through this process month after month, and must provide automation:

- a. **Automated GL coding:** Imagine having 5+ cost centers associated with telecom, and 100+ monthly invoices to manually assign across each invoice. That's 500 entries to make on a monthly basis, which is a big waste of time for otherwise strapped resources. It's one of the main reasons why companies simply stop reviewing invoices for accuracy, and simply spend their time processing invoices, thereby ignoring countless billing mistakes. It's also the reason why companies give up on obtaining the details that might otherwise be helpful in running this part of the business. Once automation is implemented, the organization's resources are freed to audit rather than process. Along with automation comes the ability to regain granular visibility into spend, at any dimension. A flexible Telecom Management solution is one that can accommodate each organization's unique needs for GL Coding, rather than forcing adaptation to a specific functionality. A reliable partner is one who dedicates resources to sit down with both IT and Accounting personnel, to better understand how GL coding is done, in order to build a system that smoothly integrates into an Enterprise's current practices, while also providing options for more granular reporting.
- b. **Automated integration with A/P applications:** Automating the application of cost centers (GL-coding) is the first step toward automation. The second step is putting an A/P file in a format that corresponds to the requirements for file import into an Accounts Payables system. With today's automation, most systems have standard requirements for importing data, and an A/P system is no different, enabling the elimination of manually entering charges, and freeing up an organization's accounting resources to focus on more important business tasks.



c. **Automated generation of reports:** Many organizations struggle with generating reports about telecom, whether they're spend-related or operationally-related, due to the disparate systems that the carriers provide, and the lack of a centralized environment or tools to have a clear view. At best, they can generate macro spend reports, but don't have the ability to drill down below the surface. An efficient Telecom Management solution is one that centralizes all telecom data and provides an Enterprise the ability to examine the data whichever way is needed by the user. 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; or a Regional Manager looking for telecom spend across their 5 regional offices; the solution must support flexibility: flexibility in providing information across target user; and flexibility in working with a provider who will help you build reporting that benefits your organization.

6. Document Management

Tracking documents pertaining to telecom services can prove elusive to the most organized of IT or Finance Departments. One way a Telecom Management solution can prove valuable would be in the area of providing a central repository of information for all telecom-related documents:

- a. **Contract Management:** From Master Service Agreements and Service Orders, to Service Level Agreements; having a centralized location to track all contracts is of paramount importance, to ensure an easy means of managing an organization's liabilities, and carriers' accountabilities.
- b. **Network Diagrams and Project Plans:** The ability to store current network diagrams showing network design and carrier circuit IDs, is advantageous in ensuring that everyone is looking at the same data. Equally beneficial is the ability to store project plans associated with active orders, and provide the capacity to reference those documents to track timelines, milestones, task owners and dependencies.

7. The Seventh Dimension

The People Element. Selecting the right partner with the right expertise, sufficient experience and sophisticated tools to help you manage your telecom environment is almost as important as the tools they provide you to gain better control. Large Enterprise customers pay for that Business Process Management (BPM) expertise. Down-market, in the mid-enterprise, the IT Department is already stretched to the limits, working to support a growing infrastructure, a more sophisticated level of employee, and an environment where secure and instant access to information and tools are a must-have, not a nice-to-have. Keeping up with the latest technologies in telecom often becomes a challenge, much less staying on top of carriers to deliver on their commitments. A Telecom Lifecycle Management Solution includes access to resources with that expertise, experience, tools and focus. The right partner must provide:

- a. Sales engineering expertise with a strong grasp of the evolving telecom technologies.
- b. Invoice auditing expertise with the tools to track and drive carrier disputes.
- c. Installation coordination expertise to effectively manage the service delivery process.
- d. Carrier implementation management expertise with the knowledge and experience to ensure the accuracy of carrier order forms, timelines and engineering design.



- e. Centralized technical support resources with technical knowledge and the tools to escalate and push on the carriers.

Whether you're referencing George A Miller's most highly cited papers in psychology, "Magical Number Seven," studying ancient Egyptian gods, or browsing the latest edition of Steven Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People;" 7 has long been considered a number that signifies both perfection and luck (ask anyone who frequents Las Vegas or Atlantic City). This holds true in effective telecom management. Without these seven dimensions, a telecom solution might prove beneficial, and provide some business intelligence, but will never enable a thorough management of a telecom life-cycle from beginning to end.



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