



**Integrated
Communications**

Whitepaper:

11 Secrets to Drastically Reducing Your Telecom Costs



*Integrated Communications, Inc
9100 Olson Memorial Hwy
Golden Valley, MN 55427
info@integratedcom.net
<http://www.integratedcom.net>*



In today's competitive business environment, every penny counts. Smart businesses stretch every dollar to maximum capacity, and your telecom services should be no exception. Yet navigating the world of telecom carriers and services can seem unreasonably daunting to many business owners and IT decision makers. There are multitudes of options, yet it's hard to distinguish which options may be best for your business.

The purpose of this report is to reveal to you the secrets of maximizing your telecom spend and to empower you to make the changes necessary to keep more of your profits in your business. We have carefully chosen these 10 ½ secrets to be the most impactful things you can do TODAY to make a major difference to your bottom line.

We hope you find this report helpful and insightful. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to help you in any way we can.

Yours truly,

Kip Brettingen

President of Integrated Communications



Secret #1: Get an audit

To get where you want to go, you first have to understand where you are. In an endeavor to reduce your telecom costs, you must first understand clearly what your business needs are, what services you are currently using, and where gaps or overlaps may be. Once you have this understanding, you can begin to adjust where necessary, to ensure you aren't skimping in one area while overpaying in another. With the rate of technology advances ever increasing, doing an annual review of your needs and services is a great way to ensure you're always covered.



Secret #2: Use a technology consultant

There are many advantages to using a telecom consultant or agent rather than going carrier direct. A telecom consultant will often perform audits and other services at no charge. They act as your trusted advisor and can custom design a solution for you based on your individual needs. And since most are not tied to one carrier over another, they will help you select from the best the entire industry has to offer. They also know through experience which carriers have the best service, which to watch out for, and which to avoid altogether. This alone cannot only save you thousands of dollars, it can also save you hundreds of hours of frustration.

Secret #3: Watch out for surcharges and fees

It's a common practice for telecom carriers to lead with the lowest price to get you to buy, and then tack on surcharges and fees on the back end. Make sure to review fee schedules before signing anything so you are fully aware of what your bills will be each month. No one likes



surprises of this nature, so do your homework to uncover all surcharges before committing. Also, once you are up and running with your services, make sure you pay your bills in a timely manner to avoid late fees and interest rates.



Secret #4: Beware of auto-renewals

This is another common tactic for carriers to build into their contracts. The basic idea is that your contract will automatically renew at the end of the term unless you say otherwise. Many carriers require you to notify them in writing, sometimes 90 days in advance, if you do not plan to auto-renew. If you can get this language removed, you will have greater leverage when your contract is up for re-negotiation. If you cannot get the language removed from the contract, submit your letter to cancel auto-renewal at the same time you submit your executed agreement.



Secret #5: Watch out for billing errors

According to Forrester Research, nearly 35% of all telecom bills have errors, and not surprisingly, the majority of them do not favor you, the customer. Make sure to review your bills frequently to catch any errors and then report them immediately. The process of applying for credits can often be daunting, so the sooner you start the process the better off you will be. This is another area your telecom consultant will typically assist you with.

Secret #6: Inventory management is a MUST!

A company's inventory frequently contains excess and many opportunities to "cut the fat," especially as technology advances and equipment capabilities increase. Along with your regular audit of your services, make sure

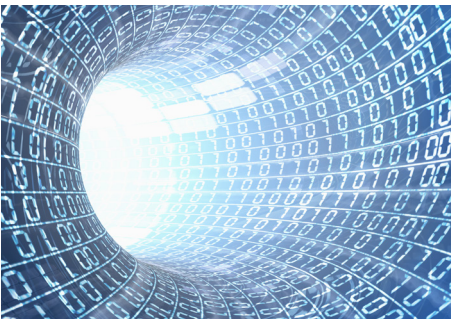


to evaluate your inventory on a regular basis to ensure you're using the right equipment. This includes everything: desk phones, mobile phones, data circuits, pagers, smart phones, laptops, and more. Knowing exactly what you have will ensure you do not overpay on equipment through duplicate orders.



Secret #7: Right-size your solution

In the telecom world, you can definitely have too much of a good thing. One of the most common mistakes in telecom expense management is paying for services you do not need or use. On the other hand, if you are overusing a particular service, you could be charged lofty overage fees. Making sure you have the right sized solution for your needs will ensure you are not ever overpaying for your services. This is something your telecom consultant can assist you with.



Secret #8: New technologies

In most cases, newer technologies can do more for less. Or perhaps they can help streamline processes within your business that make your employees more efficient and allow you to repurpose those hours saved on more important tasks. Cloud and hosted technologies are helping businesses to connect and collaborate better than ever before while reducing dependence on expensive equipment that constantly needs maintenance and updates. If you haven't made the shift yet to Cloud and hosted services, it may be worth a closer look.



Secret #9: Plan for fluctuations in usage

It's been said that the only thing constant is change, and that is always true inside a small business. However, if you can predict and plan for changing needs within your business, you can save thousands. Is your executive team planning an overseas trip? Are you launching a new service that will place increased strain on your Internet usage? Staying ahead of these situations and working with your carrier or telecom consultant will ensure you're not overcharged needlessly for fluctuations in usage of your services.



Secret #10: Renegotiate contracts

Dr. Chester Karass has said, "In business as in life, you don't get what you deserve...you get what you negotiate." This is really important to remember when signing on the line. You have more leverage than you realize, so use your negotiation skills to the max. This is another area where an experienced telecom consultant can greatly assist you. They will know the carriers that are more flexible to creative solutions and pricing. Also, don't forget to negotiate both pricing and terms.

Secret #11: Mind your security

Many people do not associate security with telecom expense management, but a breach in security can cost your company dearly. Imagine the costs associated with a fraudulent action or hijack on your network, as well as the possible costs and hassles of legal fees. Security is a lot like insurance: you don't fully appreciate it until you really need it. Make sure you have a robust security policy in place and update your passwords frequently, especially when



employees leave the company. This will reduce your risk and ensure you are compliant with regulatory laws.

Conclusion:

Managing your telecom expenses can oftentimes be an overwhelming responsibility. There are so many options and details to consider. But with the right understanding of these secret tips and tricks, you can save your company thousands while increasing your productivity.

We certainly hope you have found this information helpful. Once again, we are here to answer your questions and to help you implement any of the strategies outlined in this white paper. Please feel free to pass along this information to anyone who may find it useful.

Also, let us know if we can ever be of assistance to you.

Yours truly,

Kip Brettingen

President of Integrated Communications