



## Telecommunications Efficiency Improvements

A  
White Paper  
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The objective of this paper is to save your business money whilst improve your business efficiency... Dramatically. Every organisation can benefit from the information I provide *if* positive action is taken in line with my recommendations. That's the hard bit, you have to actually decide to do something and get a project underway to better manage your telecoms related expenses and adopt a better practice approach to take advantage of the fantastic developments of today's telecoms technology. The result will undoubtedly be seen on your bottom line, from improved customer service, lower overheads and a more efficient workforce.

**Assertion 1** – Your phone bill is not accurate, your providers are likely to be over-charging you against what you originally agreed with them.

**Assertion 2** – You are paying for circuits and capacity which is not being used and does not require continued unnecessary payments.

**Assertion 3** – You do not have the best market deal in place for basic products such as line rentals and call charges, as well as more complex wide area data services.

So how do you ensure you take immediate steps to change this? Firstly **Do Not**: Engage BT, your present provider, a “percentage of savings” consultancy, or a “paid by the day” independent consultancy. All of these will either have their own agenda or will not be up to date with the latest products and tariffs from across the market. Instead, work with an organisation that understands and deals with “everything telecoms”, knows about latest products and works with multi telecom providers and carriers.

These organisations are known as Value Added Reseller (VAR). They should have their own billing service, which enable them deal with your audit and provide a clear report which can make recommendations across the breadth of your telecoms services. There are numerous UK companies offering such services.

**Assertion 4** – You may not have investigated the possibility or subsequent impact of offering your workforce increased flexibility, through home working, hot-desking and the introduction of mobile working practices. Recently this has become a very “hot” political topic.

**Assertion 5** – You have not introduced appropriate service levels throughout your organisation to ensure all callers are given an appropriate and speedy response which enhances your reputation with them. Remember you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

**Assertion 6** – Most of your telecoms technology is well over 3 years old, has a mysterious (and probably expensive) support agreement and is treated like a necessary evil rather than an immensely powerful tool.

**Assertion 7** – Your internal IT people have not recently provided a board level strategy proposal to cost justify and address all of your communication expenditure.

**Assertion 8** - You do not have a strategy regarding all of your communication components, including Messaging, fax server, call recording, music and information on hold, diverts to your users mobiles, use of headsets etc.

**Assertion 9.** – You do not have a staff policy regarding telephone use. This should detail how to answer external DDI calls, how to handle calls for colleagues, setting a daily voice mail greeting, always leaving a detailed voice message when being answered by voice mail, setting workable and appropriate call diverts. These standards then need to be published, promoted and adhered to.

**Assertion 10.** – Most of your staff cannot make their outgoing calls from their computer screen, either directly from a contact database or phone systems database. They still tap regularly dialled numbers onto the phone costing time and reducing motivation.

**Assertion 11** – You spend a fortune calling Directory enquiry (59p per min) There are alternative services that are available at half the cost.

**Assertion 12.** – Your call logger (if you have one) sits in the corner of your Comms room, a little unloved and very much underused. This equipment could be used to unlock business trends, vital analysis and key reports.

Ok, so my assertions are somewhat provocative! Do have another look and count up how many apply to your business. Even if you think a topic doesn't apply to you it is worth getting an external opinion and advice from experts who understand telecoms and voice technology. So how should you approach the enormity of the task?

**Action 1.** – Get agreement at board level to undertake a Comms cost review to establish any overspend and discover where immediate savings can be made. Plan to move to lower cost quality providers.

**Action 2.** – Agree at board level to undertake a telecoms technology review which encompasses improving the user and caller experience whilst looking towards more flexible working options for your workforce.

**Action 3.** – Set targets for this exercise in terms of time, cost and resources committed. Prioritise your immediate problems and needs then decide to adopt “quick wins”.

**Action 4.** – Build your internal team; it should contain a board level leader as well as individuals in IT & Comms, Accounts, HR, Facilities and Customer Service plus other suitable candidates.

**Action 5.** – Research potential providers. I suggested you should work with a VAR. When choosing providers, the profile, experience and overall quality of the new business account manager(s) is vital. You need someone who has an equivalent team to draw on for pre-sales and back office support with a track record of delivering excellent long term support. Experience with more complex, challenging and leading edge technology is essential.

**Action 6.** - Get the project underway with your most favoured potential partner! Agree the scope and set expectations ensuring they meet your needs. Provide access to all people, telecoms bills, and contracts in place and give appropriate authority to the provider to seek additional information from your various current providers.

**Action 7.** – Action any immediate ways to reduce overheads – before the audit is complete. This could involve ceasing lines discovered to be unused, adopting a more efficient directory enquiry practice or other appropriate quick wins.

**Action 8.** – Get a telecoms industry view on your use of your installed systems. Consistently ask; is there a better more efficient way of working?

**Action 9.** – Understand and review at board level the benefits and implications of adopting more flexible working practices, such home working or hot desking.

**Action 10.** – Make decisions to proceed on short term wins, medium term gains and longer term strategic products and partnerships. Make sure your decisions are informed and you are confident your supplier will deliver the new service/product with minimum disruption to your organisation.

**Action 11** - Make sure you have a method of internal management which provides easy visibility of overheads, contracted dates and commitments as well as dates for expected account management reviews through out the life of the technology and new network service.

**Action 12** - Bask in the glory of your success, thank and reward your team then challenge board level colleagues to achieve comparative results.

These principles are the same no matter the size, target market or ambitions of your business.

From our experience at M12 Solutions, it does amaze us how difficult it can be to get such projects underway with organisations that would certainly save between 20% and 40% of their telecoms overhead. Is it inertia, the cosy status quo with the big name providers, or would huge savings be somewhat embarrassing? Who knows? I guess that if you, the reader of this piece can get an audit and review underway, the chances of you doing so would be at best 50/50. Why? Both M12 Solutions and our credible competitors will work initially without cost; all we ask is for a reasonable and fair chance of securing your business. This is how we compete.

My comments are based nearly 18 years of telecoms sales experience and from a board level perspective as an award winning supplier since 1992. I have supplied complex wide-area IP solutions and contact centres to stand-alone very standard phone systems my success culminated in a national award for sales professionalism in 2001. For the last 3 years I have built my own business to a level which has already gained a national Comms industry award winning reputation.