

Saving Money On Your Telephone Calls

One of the most overlooked ways to save money is examining your utility costs and in particular, your telephone bill. Many companies happily pay this without examining the costs in detail. Pareto Law kicks in and whilst most people worry about the 80% of calls, it is the 20% where 80% of the costs are hidden and this is normally calls from the office to mobiles. So if you really want to home in on costs, cut the calls to and from mobiles, it's as simple as that. It is not unreasonable to also put a limit on how much you will contribute towards staff mobile phone costs and limit unreasonable levels of mobile to mobile/fixed personal calls.

Most telephone systems will allow selective call barring so a simple way to cut mobile calls, is to have all your essential mobile numbers located in the central dialling memory and bar all others. Don't shoot yourself in the foot by overdoing this though. Your system supplier should be able to do this remotely for a nominal fee. Whilst you having the system reprogrammed, have premium numbers (09XX) barred unless you are happy to pay £1.50 per minute! If you are using a non BT provider, you may find their off peak mobile rates are higher than BT so you can always ask for your LCR (Least Cost Routing) to be programmed to send mobile calls off peak to BT or another carrier instead of the daytime provider. Also, consider a call management package. These are usually PC based and cost from £300 upwards, which can quickly be recovered in savings. If your system can provide extension number data to your call provider, you may be able to get this in an Excel format to analyse manually with your bill. Not all of them can do this though. A really simple option is to get your call data output sent from the system to a printer or PC. Most systems have a call logging port but it may need to be turned on by an engineer so get this done whilst programming any of the other options. If you have the time, get an itemised bill and pick out the numbers with high call costs.



Let everyone know that you are homing in on call costs, particularly personal calls to mobiles as this will have an instant effect. How many of your staff have a little chat with their girlfriend/boyfriend during the day? A 10 minute call will cost you over £1. If 5 people do this over a month and every day it's easy to see where savings can be made. Install a payphone which can attach to an extension of your system and they will have no excuses and you are complying with your employer obligations to allow personal calls.

Don't call 0870 numbers. Go www.saynoto0870.com to and find out what the "real" standard number is. All 0870 numbers have a real underlying number to which the 0870 maps.

Check how many lines you have on your system or in the building. It's surprising how many could be sitting there doing nothing other than attracting a nice hefty charge per quarter. Also, if you have 20 people, do you need 10 ISDN channels or lines? Are 10 people on the telephone at any one time?

Finally, change supplier to one that follows these rules and just remember if it sounds too good to be true, it is. Deals where you pay a monthly charge are usually bad. For £5 per month you can make a considerable amount of local and national calls especially when the supplier has hiked the cost to mobiles to subsidise the deal. He knows about the 80/20 rule as well! Next time you see a deal headlining savings on national calls and the odd international route, you can smile to yourself because you know what they are up to! The following is not exhaustive but comes from several years of examining scams and are things you should check for with a provider:

1. No minimum call charge, no call set up charge.
2. No rounding up to the nearest minute.
3. Check their normal fixed and mobile and particularly off peak rates if you call outside normal working hours as this is where “claw back” can occur.
4. Maximum contract length 12 months with 1 month notice thereafter.
5. Read all the small print, particularly for the minimum term and any roll on. For example, some contracts are for one year but roll on to another year if you don't give notice in time – beware.

In summary, if you do the following, you are virtually guaranteed to cut costs:

- Cut calls to mobiles. Also consider putting a “cap” on what you will pay toward staff mobile phone call costs if you provide them as part of their employment. You will be amazed at how many personal calls go on your bill.
- Bar premium rate numbers and unnecessary mobiles with system programming
- Install a call logging/management system or printer.
- Install a payphone on an extension for staff personal calls
- Don't call 0870 numbers and get the underlying geographic number
- Cut the amount of lines/ISDN channels into your building
- Change supplier but be careful of scammers and misleading deals.
- Don't just file your bills, examine them in detail and renegotiate rates frequently.
- If your bill is big enough, consider using a consultant that charges by the hour. Avoid paying a % of savings to a utility consultant unless you are sure that you will be the winner.

Useful links

BT Price List <http://www.serviceview.bt.com/list/public/homepage.htm>

Telecom's Industry Association <http://www.tiaonline.org/>

Rocom – Trade and retail suppliers of payphones etc

<http://www.rocom.co.uk/catalogue/index.cfm?event=catalogue.search&searchString=payphone>



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