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## SOCKET TECH TALK: 61 SAVE MONEY ON YOUR TELECOM BILL

Smart business owners know that now is the time to check spending habits at the door. They increase spending on sales and customer retention and decrease spending on unnecessary bills. Many businesses still haven't taken a look at where the most wasteful spending occurs: the phone bill.

According to Aberdeen Group, a telecommunications research company, 90% of telecom invoices contain billing errors. These errors vary from taxing inaccuracies to inactive services that are still being billed.

"When sitting down with a business to analyze their telecom billing, we routinely find that customers are charged for more phone lines than they thought they had," said Steve Bremer, a business sales representative for Socket, a Missouri phone and Internet provider.

"Some lines are canceled and never removed from billing, or in some cases the provider was never notified when the lines were no longer needed. Some providers also charge fees that are disguised to look as though they are government-mandated, when they actually are not."

It is important for business owners to understand their telecommunication needs. Knowing where outgoing calls are going, how long conversations last and the volume of incoming and outgoing calls is a good first step. This information should be found by going through phone bills from the previous two months.

The next step is to determine whether there is a more cost effective technology that could save money. Some new services such as T1 and VoIP are designed for businesses and usually create savings.

Once business needs have been established, an evaluation of all options is in order. Many providers are willing and able to recalculate a telecom bill. Some may simply correct errors, but others may also offer a better rate. If the company is unreasonable, consider looking for a different provider.

Before switching companies, business owners should get to know their new provider. Certain questions regarding customer service are important to consider.

Will the majority of issues and questions take hours on the phone to reconcile? Is there one

point of contact or will problem solving require being transferred and explaining the problem to multiple contacts?

Current and previous customers may also be willing to give feedback on the provider's pros and cons. Future technology needs should also be considered.

Even if advanced technology is not necessary for a business now, it may be in the future.

With the right company, many business owners should be able to receive an accurate and fair telecom bill. A complete makeover may take time and effort, but will pay for itself when the bill fits the business needs and costs are reduced.

"Although it may be easier to assume a bill is correct, it could cost a company considerably," Bremer added. "Business owners who take small steps toward understanding their telecom bill and correcting it will be well on their way to saving money."

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