

Bell pitches new rates

Michigan Bell is reaching out and touching the pocketbooks of telephone customers — some heavily, some lightly.

In two announcements last week, the telephone company said:

- It proposes to change installation rates for single-family residences, eliminating the flat installation fee. Customers would pay only for an employee's time spent at the home.
- It's introducing picture phones for businesses in the Detroit area. The pitch: Face-to-face phone meetings are less expensive than long-distance travel.

NEW INSTALLATION charges to homeowners would be regressed and based strictly on the time it takes to do the work.

"Today we charge every residential customer the same amount for installing a telephone, even though we may have to spend hours putting in one customer's phone and only minutes connecting another one," said Donald M. Lambie, Michigan Bell assistant vice president.

Under changes Bell proposed to the Michigan Public Service Commission, simple business and residence installations would be \$18 for the first 15 minutes of work, on a customer's premises, plus \$10.50 for each additional 15-minute increment.

For example, a typical new-order installation in a single-family home may require an average of 45 minutes of installer time on the customer premises. Under the present system, the customer is billed for following items separately: \$1.15 for each jack, \$3.15 for handling for each Bell-supplied phone, \$9.43 for each inside wire and \$12.56 in service order/premise work charges. The charges are the same regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete the job.

UNDER PROPOSED changes, the customer would pay for the minutes spent on the premises, or \$39 (\$18 for the first 15 minutes plus \$21 for an additional 30 minutes).

Customers would continue to have the option of picking up their phones from company locations.

Other proposed changes include:

- Elimination of the monthly charge for wiring and jacks for single-line telephones. Instead these costs would be paid for at the time service is installed.
- Increasing the customer credit for returning Michigan Bell phones to the company from \$2.50 to \$5 per phone.
- Separating the current monthly rate for TouchTone service into two distinct charges — one monthly rate for TouchTone line facilities and a separate rate for each TouchTone phone. TouchTone line charges would be reduced to \$1.15 for residence customers and would remain \$2.39 for businesses.

DETROIT AREA businesses by mid-1982 will be among firms in 16 cities to be linked in a digital video teleconferencing network.

American Telephone and Telegraph Co., Michigan Bell's corporate parent, has filed a request with the Federal Communications Commission to offer a new, two-way video teleconferencing service.

With Picturephone Meeting Service (PMS), businesses are able to conduct meetings and share visual information with participants in distant cities without having to travel any further than a PMS teleconference room.

The service would transmit in full color over a network of satellite and land facilities.

AT&T SAID it would make the service available to customers in two ways.

A customer could use a public room, which AT&T plans to build in each of the 42 cities it will service.

Or customers could choose to build private video teleconference rooms on their own premises. Any room, public or private could be used.

Besides enabling meeting participants to see and talk to each other, each video teleconference room would be equipped with cameras to display charts, slides and other graphic materials, a copy machine to reproduce copies of images displayed on the incoming monitor and a video tape recorder to record incoming or outgoing picture and sound.

TYPICAL CHARGES for a customer using two AT&T rooms to conduct a one-hour meeting between Detroit and Chicago would be \$970. A similar one-hour meeting between Detroit and Los Angeles would cost the user \$1,770.

Charges for calls placed from private customer rooms would be lower: \$600 for a one-hour Detroit-Chicago meeting and \$1,400 for one-hour Detroit-Los Angeles sessions.

Customers installing private rooms would pay one-time Bell system installation charges of \$124,800, as well as monthly equipment rental and access fee of \$13,420. In addition, there would be a monthly charge of \$250 per mile to connect each room to Bell system.

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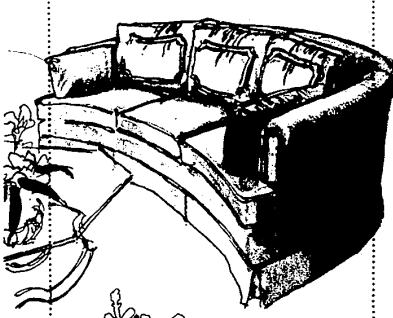
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