

Learn to save, analyze on your business phone bills



JANE SYDLOWSKI

Any business can improve its bottom line through lowering its telecommunications costs. Vigilance in the area of telecommunications can also result in a better quality of service. How do you do this? Here are some tips.

Monthly service charges

Call the business office of the company that provides your local telephone service and request your Customer Service Record, or CSR. You may have monthly charges on your account that you are not aware of. In other words, you may have been "crammed." "Cramming" is a term that means billing an account for additional services without the customer's written knowledge or consent. Call waiting or conference calling are examples of such charges. The service was never ordered, nor was it desired. Yet, you have been paying the flat monthly fee for these services to a company that billed you for

them in the hopes that you wouldn't notice.

If you have been "crammed," place a call to the business office of your local provider and ask the following direct questions:

■ Who gave you the authority to add these services to this account?

■ Do you have this request in writing?

■ When will the credit be applied to this account? The credit should be the value of your dollars spent since the first occurrence. If they tell you they can only credit you for 90 days when the charge has been appearing for longer, advise them that you will notify the Public Service Commission. The Michigan PSC address is provided below.

■ What is the customer service representative's name and direct telephone number? This will allow you to follow through if the credit never appears.

Research carrier costs

Ordering long distance services is more interesting these days because you can actually select one carrier to handle local toll calls (IntraLATA) and another carrier to send long distance

calls (InterLATA). In the Detroit metro area, IntraLATA means those calls placed to 313, 734, 248, 810 area codes, and soon to be more. You can select another carrier to handle your traditional long distance calls. Selecting two separate carriers for these services is called 2-PIC, or "2-Primary Inter-exchange Carriers."

Why would you do this?

To reduce costs of course. When researching carriers, two priorities surface: high quality of service and low prices. In general, depending upon the call volumes of your organization, the price per minute should range between 3 cents for high call volumes to 8 cents for smaller call volumes. Carriers will round the length of your call to anywhere between 1 second to a full minute. Never allow your carrier of choice to round to the nearest minute. Make sure that you ask for them to round to a 1-, 3-, or 6-second interval.

In order to assure high quality of service, stick with the known carriers. The same pricing can be attained from "Podunk Long Distance" or AT&T if you negotiate properly. One fun Web sight that will help you benchmark

your potential rates for your location is www.chamber.com/tools/dd.html. Call the carrier of choice, which may be your existing carrier, and ask them to match the program that you just found.

Watch your monthly bills for rate-per-minute accuracy.

Since the deregulation of communication services, "slamming" has been prevalent. Slamming happens when a long distance carrier places its service on your account, thereby replacing an existing carrier without your knowledge or consent. Often the rate is extremely high - ranging between 25 cents and \$3 per minute.

To remove the unwanted carrier from your account, contact your local carrier's business office and ask for its removal and replacement with the desired carrier. Do not forget to request a credit for the charges by using the same questions outlined above.

Perhaps long distance charges from your desired long distance carrier are appearing on your local telephone bill and not on a separate long distance bill. The rate-per-minute can be much higher than you expected when

you originally selected this long distance carrier.

In this instance, two calls are necessary to move and correct the billing on your account. First, call your desired long distance carrier to share the account number from your local bill and to request a credit to match the contracted rate expected. Second, call your local provider to advise which company you have selected to be your long distance provider.

Protect yourself

To protect your organization from "slamming" and/or "cramming," write a letter to your local provider asking them to allow no changes to your account without your written permission. This request is technically called a "PIC freeze." If indeed this occurs after you send the letter, the collection for the over-charge is easier to attain. Be sure to send the letter via certified mail to a specific manager at the provider's business office.

Lastly, if indeed you have requested "fixes or credits" to your account because of slamming and/or cramming, diligent follow-through is required on your part. Do not accept the

local provider's verbal commitment to fix the problem at face value. Monthly scrutiny of all telephone bills is required. If you are not satisfied with your service after making sincere efforts to correct problems in writing, state your complaints in yourself to:

Michigan Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 30221, Lansing, MI 48909, 1-800-292-8555

Ask for help

If you're getting bogged down in telecommunications issues and costs, maybe it's time to call for help. American Megacomm Inc.'s Network Services Team can audit a company's telephone records, in some instances, going as far as three years back, and secure refunds for overcharges.

Jane Sydlowski founded American Megacomm, Inc. of Livonia, Michigan, in 1991 to assist companies of all sizes with their technology and telecommunications needs. To reach her directly, call American Megacomm at 734-464-8888 or e-mail janes@americanmegacomm.com. More information on AMI services is available by logging onto www.americanmegacomm.com.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

WED, JUNE 27

BUSINESS NETWORK INT'L
BNI Livonia Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m. at Archie's Family Restaurant, Plymouth Road, east of Merriman, Livonia, Call (810) 323-3800.

BUSINESS OWNER SEMINAR

Financial advisors Suzanne Zeising and Pete Tenuta of Morgan Stanley will sponsor a free luncheon presentation on the Morgan Stanley BusinessScape Program noon at 17420 Laurel Park Drive North, Livonia. For reservations, call Michelle Lorenger at (734) 432-7519.

THURS, JUNE 28

SCHOOLCRAFT SEMINAR

If your company is considering competing for government contracts, attend How to Become a Government Contractor at Schoolcraft College 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The half-day seminar will give insight into this large market and show you how to contract. Topics include: philosophy of government purchasing; updated requirements for government contractors; helpful resources in dealing with the government; and the services and training programs available at Schoolcraft College's Business Development Center. Cost is \$25. To register, call the Business Development Center at (734) 462-4438. Schoolcraft College is located at 18600 Haggerty Road between Six and Seven Mile roads.

ness Development Center at (734) 462-4438. Schoolcraft College is located at 18600 Haggerty Road between Six and Seven Mile roads.

ESTATE PLANNING

"Wealth Building Strategies" is the subject of a seminar presented at 6 p.m. by Jonathan Stanley, vice president, financial advisor, and Rule 144 specialist in Morgan Stanley Dean Witter's Laurel Park office. Seating is limited. Call Sue Rankin at (800) 745-4560, ext. 7524.

FRI, JUNE 29

BUSINESS NETWORK INT'L
BNI Livonia Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m. at the Senior Coney Island, Plymouth Road at Stark, Livonia, Call (810) 323-3800.

WED, JULY 11

LEARN TO BE LEAN
The Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center (47911 Halvard, Plymouth) will sponsor a breakfast briefing 8-10 a.m. featuring Denny Pawley, CEO, Lean Learning Center (former vice president of manufacturing of Daimler Chrysler). The developer of the Lean-based Chrysler Operating System, Pawley will talk about the transformation process of becoming a lean supplier. Call Tim Shearer at 888-414-6882, ext.

BUSINESS MARKETPLACE

Marketing award

Ford Motor Company announced that FCS Inc. of Livonia and Maritz Travel Company of Livonia were among 24 suppliers that received Ford's Marketing Excellence Award for outstanding work during the 2000 calendar year.

"The Marketing Excellence Award is given annually to suppliers who achieve the highest level of performance," said Janet Klug, Ford vice president of global marketing. "We consider our suppliers to be an integral part of the Ford Family, continuing to

play an instrumental role in helping us attain our goal of becoming the world's leading consumer company."

More than 50 suppliers from the U.S. and Canada submitted entries for this year's award. To qualify, a supplier must have a minimum of four separate programs during the year that are assessed by two or more Ford coordinators. A total score of 90 percent is required to be considered for the award.

Media awards

Jacobs Communications, a

Farmington Hills-based company specializing in corporate communications, recently won awards from the Association of Women in Communications, the International Association of Business Communicators and the International Film and Video Festival.

Momentum, a global newsletter written, designed and produced by Jacobs Communications for Visteon Corporation, won a Clarion Award for best corporate internal newsletter in the Women in Communications' national competition. The employee publication also

received Silver Quill awards for both editorial content and design in the IABC district competition, as well as an Award of Merit from the Detroit chapter.

Jacobs Communications, with recently acquired Ewald Motion Pictures, earned a third-place award from the International Film and Video Festival for a training video and CD produced for Visteon Global Technologies. The category drew 1,500 corporate video entries from 33 countries.

In addition, the company received an IABC Detroit Award of Honor for its new Web site.

MEDICAL DATEBOOK

town callers).

TUES, JUNE 26

You'll Love Our...
SIDEWALK SALE
1/2 OFF EVERYTHING
OUTSIDE
June 28, 29, 30 & 31
Lover's Lane
2020 N. Wayne Road (S. of Ford Road) • Westland

ANGELA HOSPICE

Angela Hospice grief support group meets 6:30 p.m. at Angela

Please see DATEBOOK, D6

Arthritis Today
JOSEPH J. WEISS, M.D. RHEUMATOLOGY
18829 Farmington Road
Livonia, Michigan 48152
Phone: (248) 478-7850

DIET AND ARTHRITIS

In the past, this column has said that "a good diet is a good arthritis diet." That statement still holds.

The causes of rheumatoid arthritis and its variations, is information set off by actions of lymphocytes. One type, the T cells, stimulates both other T cells and recruits B-lymphocytes to initiate changes that lead to rheumatoid arthritis.

What controls these lymphocytes resides in the thymus gland in the fetus in the case of the T cells and from the bone marrow cells both during embryonic and early life for B-cells. These directors come from a blueprint residing in the baby genes and chromosomes. What the lymphocyte can do is room and married.

Diet cannot make these cells change their response.

Osteoarthritis has a different cause. Heredity and injury play a large part, but a limited role for diet may be possible. Primarily glucosamine sulfate in the supplement under scientific study. As an answer to how much it helps to prevent or treat osteoarthritis will be forthcoming in the next 12-18 months.

The one exception on the limited role of diet in arthritis is gout. Excess eating and liberal to binge drinking of wine, brandy, and whiskey can lead to a gout attack. However, for most people with gout, such dietary extravagance plays no role. Rather, the problem is the inherited way their body handles uric acid, or that medication otherwise needed interferes with uric acid elimination.

In dealing with arthritis and your diet, common sense is still the rule.

SPOTLIGHT ON
Orthodontics
by Josephine Finazzo, D.M.D.
ONCE CROSSED

The malocclusion known as a crossbite is characterized by bottom teeth that are shifted to one side, or shifted forward or backward. For example, the top teeth may fall inside the bottom teeth on one side, or the top front teeth may fall behind the lower front teeth when biting down. Crossbites often occur in children who breathe almost exclusively through their mouths due to large adenoids and tonsils. This habit encourages the tongue to drop from its normal position at the roof of the mouth, where it promotes widening of the upper jaw. Sometimes, adult teeth growing in the narrow upper jaw of a mouth-breathing child become squeezed inward and land behind the bottom front teeth when biting down.

If you suspect that your child may have a cross bite, having it diagnosed and treated now may prevent other health problems from surfacing later. At THE ORTHODONTIC GROUP, we hope that the information we provide in our column provides you with assistance in caring for your family's teeth. We would be glad to explain how various orthodontic equipment such as the Twin Block, the Maxillofacial Advancer, palatal expanders, and retainers work. Please feel free to contact our office with questions, or to make an appointment, at 442-8855. We are at 19850 Middlebelt.

THE ORTHODONTIC GROUP
19850 Middlebelt • Livonia • (248) 442-8855

This is Premium Ice Cream!



**The Thickest —
The Creamiest!**

The newest

**Ritter's Frozen Custard Shoppe
is now open in Livonia!**

Livonia

8 mile Rd & Merriman Rd.

Hours:

Fri. and Sat. until 11 p.m.

Sun. - Thurs. until 10 p.m.

Check It Out!
Smoothie!

This is Premium

CHECK IT OUT! COUPON
IS GOOD FOR ONE SMALL
CUP OR CONE!

Good only at: 8 mile & Merriman in Livonia
Coupon Expires July 15, 2001
ONE COUPON PER FAMILY PER VISIT. NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER.