

ONE SOURCE COMMUNICATIONS

Why Should I Use A TEM Provider if I Have Spreadsheets?

For years, many small and mid-sized enterprises with less than \$1 billion in annual revenue have avoided contracting with a Telecom Expense Management (TEM) vendor and tried to perform the same functions and activities to the same extent through spreadsheets.

These organizations typically have been reluctant to spend on a TEM provider, not realizing that the benefits they would gain would far exceed the financial outlay. In most cases, too, these firms would save money after fees because they would avoid costly, often recurring, mistakes.

So, when it comes to the question of why to use a TEM provider rather than spreadsheets, the answer is this: TEM has grown into far more than just telecom. These days, TEM encompasses managing enterprise mobility (including mobile device management), cloud (including hybrid cloud), unified communications, SD-WAN, the internet of things, and so much more – all while needing to keep traditional telecom in check, too. In fact, think of TEM as Communications Lifecycle Management (CLM), a holistic approach to the telecom, mobility and information technology environment.



Another key reason why spreadsheets do not stand in for true TEM is that organizations, especially smaller ones, often lack the resources for handling contract and lifecycle management on their own. Much of the ability to accurately track agreement expiration to prevent tariff rates, device upgrade, and other important change dates relies on automation and specially developed software. Spreadsheets further do not necessarily, or easily, include plugins for monitoring order implementations or flagging changes in invoice amounts against contracts. In addition, the element of human expertise remains paramount. And dedicating a full-time employee or two just to contract and lifecycle management is not possible for many end users.

Small and mid-sized enterprises therefore miss opportunities for significant cost savings. However, a CLM provider can step in to deliver expertise including enterprise architecture design that balances cost effectiveness and business needs; to optimize portfolios and negotiate carrier contracts; to conduct ongoing invoice audits that identify any errors; and to recover erroneous charges.



Another aspect to consider is that using spreadsheets rarely, if ever, generates soft savings. Spreadsheets do not provide interactivity that allows customers within the organization to submit tickets or requests, for example; therefore, spreadsheets do not create higher customer satisfaction with the telecom, mobility, or IT department. Spreadsheets also do not monitor for, and automatically implement, changes in compliance requirements, for instance, or issue reports that point the way toward increased savings or efficiency. CLM vendors, on the other hand, do all this, and manage all aspects of lifecycle from procurement to payment to help desk. These vendors take on all these tasks to create operational efficiencies and produce the soft savings that several full-time equivalents would create, at less expense and in less time.

As technology changes, spreadsheets do not suffice. Partnering with a TEM vendor makes sense. A TEM vendor has more specialized resources than enterprises, especially smaller ones. A TEM vendor has the people, time, processes, technology, relationships with carriers and suppliers, and collective knowledge and experience, at the ready. Ideally, a TEM provider will work with clients on a fully managed basis – meaning, the customer does not have to focus energies on administering the communications environment and can instead attend to strategic projects. The TEM provider in this scenario acts as an extension of the client's telecom, mobility, and/or IT business unit.

Until small and mid-sized enterprises understand how working with a TEM vendor built to help them will improve operations, support the achievement of business goals, and even create revenue, they will stay stuck in patterns that keep them from reaching the same levels of efficiency as their larger peers.