



Operating a Telecommunications Business **Successfully with BackOffice**

A Guide from Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services



Communication is a key element of good business strategy, now more than ever with increasingly crowded markets. And that is precisely why there exists so much opportunity in the telecommunications industry.

To assist new and growing businesses in the telecom market, this white paper will analyze proven methods to achieve success in managing a telecommunications business using the solid functionality of BackOffice. To do this, we will dive deep into the operations of a successful company by discussing the three key components to the BackOffice strategy:

- Provisioning
- Support
- Billing

Provisioning

What is Provisioning?

Provisioning is the act of onboarding a new customer or establishing a new service. This could be processing a sales order so that a new customer can start using your service or adding new or additional services to an existing customers account. Either way, it is important to make this an instant and painless experience.

How is Provisioning Done?

Here are the steps that Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services takes when handling new customer onboarding. Keep in mind the goal is to make this as quick and painless as possible.

Step 1: Our process starts when the sales team emails an electronic order form to the customer. The customer completes the form online and executes the order via e-signature.

Step 2: The order is instantly delivered to the billing department, passing the baton to them. The new account is created, and the service billing is configured.

Step 3: The baton is then passed to the interop team. The purchased services are provisioned for production, tested, and then released.

Step 4: Both support and sales are notified and the process is completed.

Similar processes are required for services provisioned to existing customers, such as DID's, LNP's, e911, 411, rate decks, SMS, and fax services, just to name a few.

When a new sale is made, things can start to spiral downward if communication is not up to par. There are two sides to every sale. There is the guarantee of great services, features, and timeframes, and then there is the actuality of whether or not those things can be done by the operations staff. Those two sides need to match, otherwise the “my company is the greatest thing since sliced bread” idea that was sold to the customer begins to look more like a loaf of uncut, moldy bread.

Provisioning: Key Takeaways

So, when it comes to delivering what your sales team promises, there are a couple rules to remember.

Rule 1: Train your entire team to speak the same language.

At Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services, we call this being on the same page. Every person in every department (marketing, sales, provisioning, support, and billing) is on the same team, and everyone on our team knows what products and services we sell and how we sell them.

Rule 2: Build a repeatable, scalable process that is well-documented and simple to execute.

Each part of the process should have a defined starting and ending point. These are the points where the baton is passed from one department to another. It also provides clear accountability and predictability throughout the entire process.

The key to a great provisioning process is giving the customer a quick and painless experience. A well-defined provisioning process allows for more predictability and less human error, equaling a better customer experience.

Support

What does Great Customer Support Look Like?

Support can truly make a difference for any organization. The 'secret' to great customer support is to wow your customers. What does wowing your customers mean? Going above and beyond the normal processes and procedures to satisfy the wants, needs, and problems of customers.

Every company will say they wow their customers, but very few actually do. Achieving that "wow" level of customer support involves a combination of investing deeply in your employees and making sure everyone stays on the same page.

The Non-Human Element of Customer Support

But that's not all! A great workforce is just the foundation to developing an incredible support experience. The employees are definitely a large part of creating this, but they comprise only part of the equation. The rest is defined by the customer's interaction with non-human elements.

Non-human elements are things like your phone system, trouble ticket system, documentation, and troubleshooting tools. Take your phone system, for example. Is your phone system a complicated maze of options, or is it direct and easy to navigate? Can a member of your organization be reached, or will your customers be redirected to a voicemail or outsourced call center?



The non-human elements also include your written or documented forms of communication. Using a trouble ticketing system and BackOffice forms is a good way to document and keep everyone on the same page.

Troubleshooting tools and documentation are also two very important non-human elements. Most customers want to resolve their own issues and only contact support as a last resort. At Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services, we have found that if you provide better documentation and tools, it leads to less support issues and happier customers.

Support: Key Takeaways

So, when it comes to delivering “WOW” customer support, there are a couple rules to remember.

Rule 1: Invest deeply in your team, both in compensation and in training.

This is something we have been doing at Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services for years and the primary reason for our exceptional growth.

Rule 2: Provide customers exceptional experiences with non-human elements.

The saying “You have to go slow in order to go fast” holds true. Adding non-human elements and ensuring they elevate customer experience takes time and resources, but, in the end, doing so greatly reduces support nightmares and unsatisfied customers.

Billing

The Frustration of Billing

Billing is the final step a company must master in order to find success operating a telecommunications business. Customers leave a company for all kinds of reasons, but one of the most common is frustration with billing issues. The ability to invoice your customers accurately and on-time is essential to ensure complete customer satisfaction.

Unfortunately, the telecommunications industry is very complicated when it comes to service billing because there are so many different factors, from billing millions of origination and termination minutes per month to keeping track of CDRs (call data records), MRCs (monthly recurring costs), and NRCs (no-recurring costs). You also have to manage databases, scripts, processes, late payers, shutoffs, and disputes. This is where things start to get more complex and where most providers will fail.

Billing Processes

To build a truly scalable business requires taking the time to develop and document well-defined processes that guarantee accuracy and accountability. This is another example of having to go slow in order to go fast.

At Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services, we have defined processes for just about every aspect of our billing system. These processes range everywhere from payments, credits, disputes, and cancellations, all the way to simply answering questions. Each process you have should be “owned” by a single person (or group) so there is one party held accountable for managing that process. And if a process becomes broken or obsolete, take the time to sit down, update the process, and retrain your staff.

A person in a dark suit and light-colored shirt is shown from the chest up, holding a silver pen in their right hand. The background is blurred. A large, semi-transparent blue shape is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

Accuracy

Once you have a system set up to better manage billing processes, you have to take a look at the accuracy of your billing. As we mentioned earlier, there are millions of origination and termination minutes that need to be billed to customers each month. It's easy for a company to say they will bill on time and accurately. It's much more difficult to actually follow through with that kind of promise, every time.

Accuracy is key to successful billing and will set you apart from your competition in a big way. Billing that is accurate and transparent makes your customers' lives easier, not harder, which instills greater loyalty in your company.

Reporting

Robust reporting is an important billing differentiator because managing vendor costs on a daily basis is key to avoiding unwanted billing surprises. Most companies manage their vendor costs at the end of every month, which can prove to be a risky game.

Due to volatility and surcharges, most companies can't afford to lose track during the month. Choosing a provider with insightful reporting will enable you to manage your costs daily which reduces any end of month unwanted billing surprises. Providing this same kind of service to customers can revolutionize the experience they have doing business with your company.

Transparency

Customers desire instant access to key billing metrics such as service usage, CDRs, transactions, pricing, pre-paid balance, and monthly minimums, just to name a few. Providing this type of transparency allows your customers to have total confidence in your billing and in your business.

Adding creative and useful account transparency along with robust, easy to interpret reporting, will set you apart from your competition, giving you that unbeatable edge that any company would need to be on top.

Billing is a key component to your overall service offerings. It can be your competitive advantage or it could be the reason you lose your customers, the choice is yours. Providing accurate billing is a table stake, so don't brag that you will bill accurately and on-time because there can never be a guarantee for this. You must take time to develop and document processes because those are key to creating a scalable and repeatable billing structure.

Billing: Key Takeaways

There are four key elements to maintaining a solid billing platform for your company:

- Develop well-documented, scalable billing processes
- Ensure complete accuracy in records and invoices
- Allow customers to manage costs with robust reporting
- Provide total transparency, both internally and with customers



JUST GETTING STARTED?

Contact a helpful specialist at Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services. We are happy to guide new and growing VoIP businesses through the decisions and strategies necessary to thrive in the modern service provider marketplace.

Sangoma Wholesale Carrier Services is the only telecom vendor that provides startups and small businesses with billing and end user solutions that are tailor-made for their needs. Taking advantage of our solutions can save you months of research and development time.

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