

The New Business Value of Call Accounting

WHITE PAPER



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The New Business Value of Call Accounting

How Telecom/UC Managers Utilize Cutting-Edge Call Accounting Software to Drive True Business Value

Introduction	2
Who benefits from call accounting?	3
How call accounting software works	3
Making sense of the data	5
Call accounting use cases	8
Conclusion	13

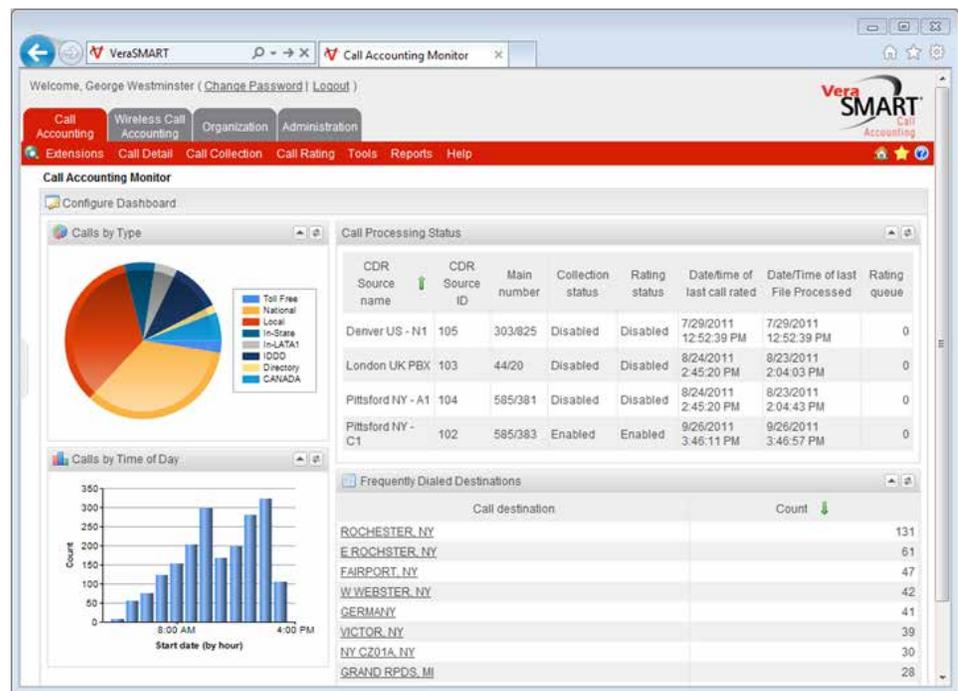
Introduction

Do you remember when making long distance calls was so expensive that businesses used call accounting software to monitor the expense?

The telecom environment has changed dramatically, but telecom remains one of the top five expenses for most organizations. Modern call accounting software, now available on-premise or as a cloud service, still does a great job of monitoring both landline and cellular usage. But savvy Telecom/Unified Communications Managers know that advanced call accounting software has evolved far beyond its origins.

Today's call accounting software can be used to optimize the telecom network, enhance corporate security, track marketing ROI, protect against fraud and abuse, increase customer satisfaction, and more. By incorporating usage and spend data with information about organizational structure and personnel, call accounting software provides powerful cost allocation capabilities, allowing usage costs to be assigned to individuals, extensions, projects, accounts, cost centers, and other organizational units.

Call accounting software provides usage and cost information essential for optimizing the telecom network and minimizing expenses.



Advanced call accounting data discovery and visualization tools now enable managers to explore call detail records (CDRs) in ways never before possible, providing answers to questions they might not have previously thought to ask. Some call accounting applications even allow users to self-identify their personal vs. business calls for the purpose of expense classification, reimbursement, or simple usage tracking.

This white paper will demonstrate how today's call accounting software enables Telecom/UC Managers to make better-informed business decisions, schedule strategic investments, and determine the most cost-effective plans for their future communications environment.

Who benefits from call accounting?

Modern applications for call accounting cross all industries and functional groups and extend to virtually every organization. Software packages are available for organizations of any size, with any number of locations and extensions, and with any combination of wireless and wireline networks. Call accounting will benefit any organization that wants to gain visibility into and control over their telecom network.

Here are a few examples of how call accounting benefits different business units:

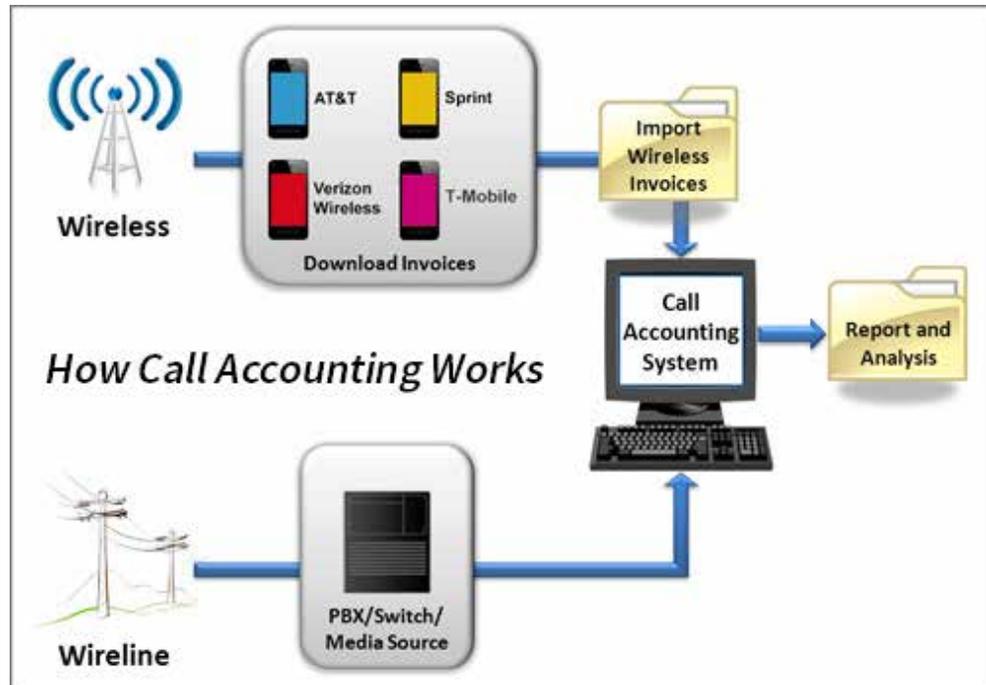
- Sales Management – to monitor staff talk time (average talk time per extension), the accounts they are prospecting, and numbers dialed
- Marketing – to measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns by directing phone inquiries to a dedicated extension
- IT and Network Security – to monitor system usage vs. capacity and to identify unauthorized use
- HR and Legal – to capture information on calls related to threats, harassment or emergencies
- Finance – to get a handle on communication costs and improve the budgeting process
- Customer Service – to gain insight into the relationship between customer value and amount of customer contact

How call accounting software works

Call accounting software works by:

1. Collecting call detail record (CDR) data, which includes information about:
 - Numbers dialed
 - Incoming calls
 - Extensions used to make calls
 - Length, date, time and cost of the calls made
2. Providing capabilities to search and analyze the data
3. Allowing users to apply rate data to calculate usage costs
4. Integrating with organization data to assign usage and costs to personnel and cost centers

Call accounting software collects call data from telecom switches and invoices, calculates usage charges, and provides management reports, alerts, and dashboards.



5. Reporting on cost allocation, traffic and trunk analysis, exceptional activity, and other call and cost data

The means by which call accounting software performs these functions depends on how calls are being made and processed. Wireline calls, which are processed through traditional PBX switches, IP switches, or some combination of both, send CDR data directly to the call accounting system. As a result, wireline CDR data is available for analysis and reporting as soon as calls are placed or received.

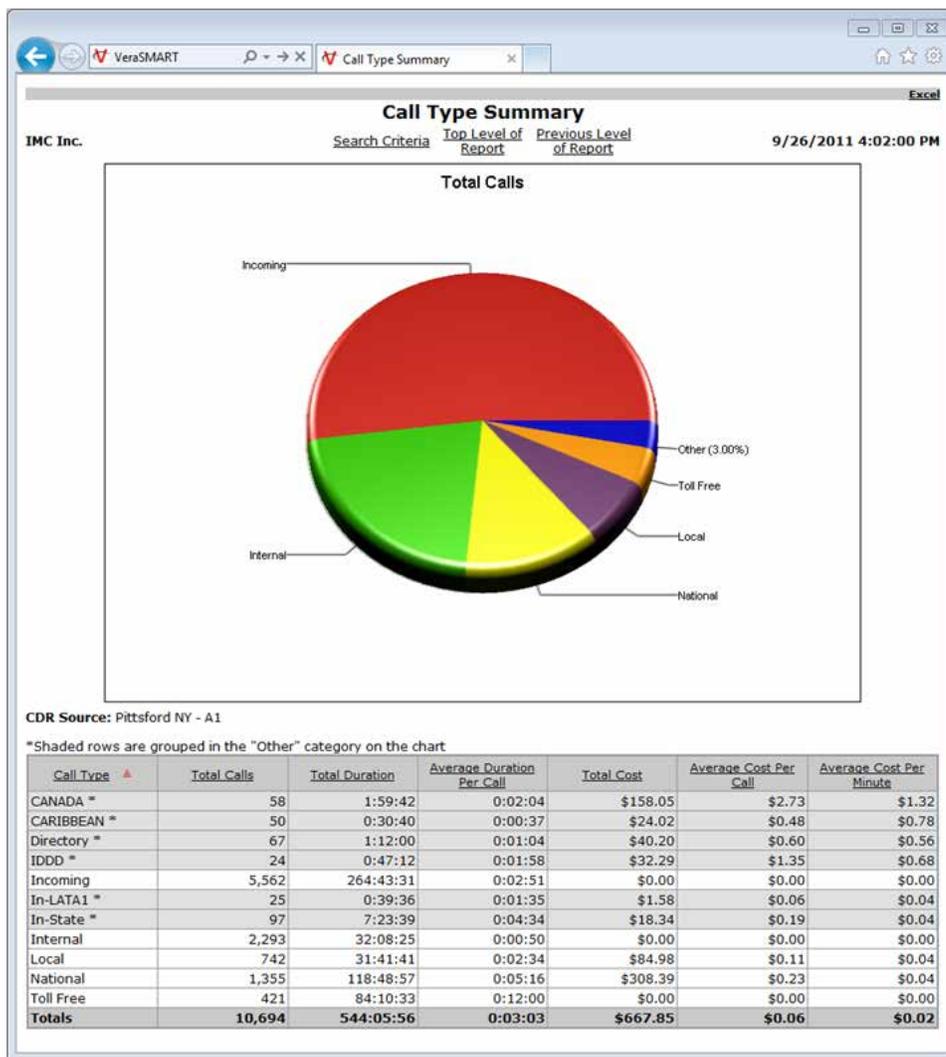
Wireless call activity, which does not use the landline switching system, requires different methods of CDR capture. Wireless service invoices are a source of wireless CDR. Sophisticated wireless call accounting software processes these invoices electronically to glean information that corresponds to the wireline CDR data collected from PBX or IP switches.

Call accounting software that collects both wireline and wireless CDR data can analyze and report on these two types of call data separately or together. For example, to gain a picture of mobile device usage, separate usage reporting for wireless alone makes sense. Combined reporting provides visibility to overall telecom spend by individual user or business unit.

Making sense of the data

The collection of wireless and wireline call data is half the battle; understanding it and using it to make informed business decisions is the other. Call accounting software includes analysis and reporting features that help you make sense of the data and identify ways to optimize the telecom network, use it more efficiently, and save money.

Powerful, flexible reporting capabilities



Call accounting reports can be generated ad hoc or scheduled for distribution to a specific list of recipients.

Advanced call accounting solutions include powerful, flexible reporting capabilities that help you access the specific information you need. An integrated report engine and library of templates simplify reporting by eliminating the need for 3rd party software. Reports are typically generated in printable/exportable HTML or ASCII format that is easy to save and share.

Advanced call accounting software packages include:

- Scheduled and on-demand reporting capabilities
- Report templates with easy to modify filters and fields
- On-screen presentation with sortable columns and the ability to export to Microsoft® Excel®

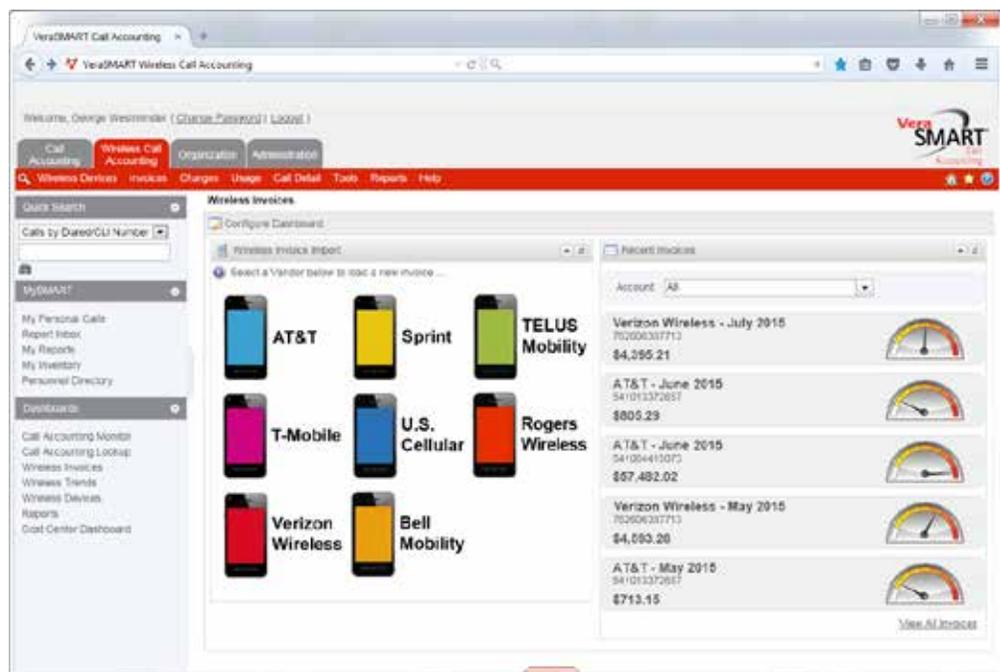
The types of report templates you can expect to find in call accounting software span the spectrum of telecom management needs:

- Accounting reports provide information on phone usage by individuals, organizations, or accounts charged for calls
- Analysis reports summarize telecom activity by various categories (date, time of day, cost and duration, etc.)
- Exception reports provide details on calls that warrant a telecom manager’s attention (such as longest / expensive calls, wireless devices or landline trunks without activity)
- Call search reports locate records through broad or narrow search criteria
- Savings reports identify opportunities to use the network more efficiently or cost effectively, such as analyzing wireless invoices for overages and service plan optimization

Management dashboards

On-screen dashboards are an increasingly popular way to view and manage call activity. Dashboards present this information in a graphical form that allows users to monitor call and cost data at a glance.

A modular dashboard for wireless call accounting composed of three components: Invoice Import, Recent Invoices, and Average Device Cost by Vendor.



Dashboards are typically assembled from smaller components that the user can arrange on the screen in whatever form best suits their information needs. Whereas reports provide a snapshot of call accounting data – which is well suited for periodic reporting – dashboards provide a “real time” view of the data that is valuable for monitoring critical or rapidly changing metrics.

Analytics for data discovery and visualization



Interactive, multi-dimensional visualizations provide new ways to analyze and interact with your data.

In addition to standard static reports and dashboards, cutting edge call accounting software packages include interactive data discovery and data visualization tools that enable managers to deeply explore their call data and:

- Gain actionable insights in minutes instead of hours or days using conventional reports. Apply that insight immediately to accelerate ROI of your communications programs.
- Bring their call accounting data to life with visualizations that make it easy to share cost saving opportunities, potential risks, and additional insights with management and other members of the team.
- Compare metrics and key performance indicators to spot subtle trends, geographic patterns, unusual activity and cost spikes, compliance risks, and excessive usage.
- Drill deeper into their data, leveraging free-form exploration to identify problem causes and correlations that warrant further scrutiny.

Interactivity, accountability, and self-service

Leading call accounting applications are Web-based and are accessed through a standard Web browser. A high degree of interactivity can be supported through the ubiquity of the Internet, the familiarity of the browser interfaces, and the power of hyperlinking.

Both HTML reports and on-screen dashboards can include links to related information. For example, an Expensive Call Report in HTML lists expenses by cost center. Each cost center links to a related report listing costs by individual employees within the cost center. Similarly, you can click on a Recent Invoices dashboard component to display the details of each invoice. The ability to “drill down” from summary level information to the underlying details allows users to access the specific level of call and cost information they need.

Web browser access, and the security it provides, allows users throughout the organization to access and view their own calling activity and costs, boosting accountability and encouraging responsible use of telecom resources. Top call accounting applications include interactive self-service features that enhance reporting and cost accounting. For example, a personal call identification feature lets employees designate their calls as either personal or business, allowing the organization to accurately classify expenses and avoid reimbursing employees for calls that are not business-related.

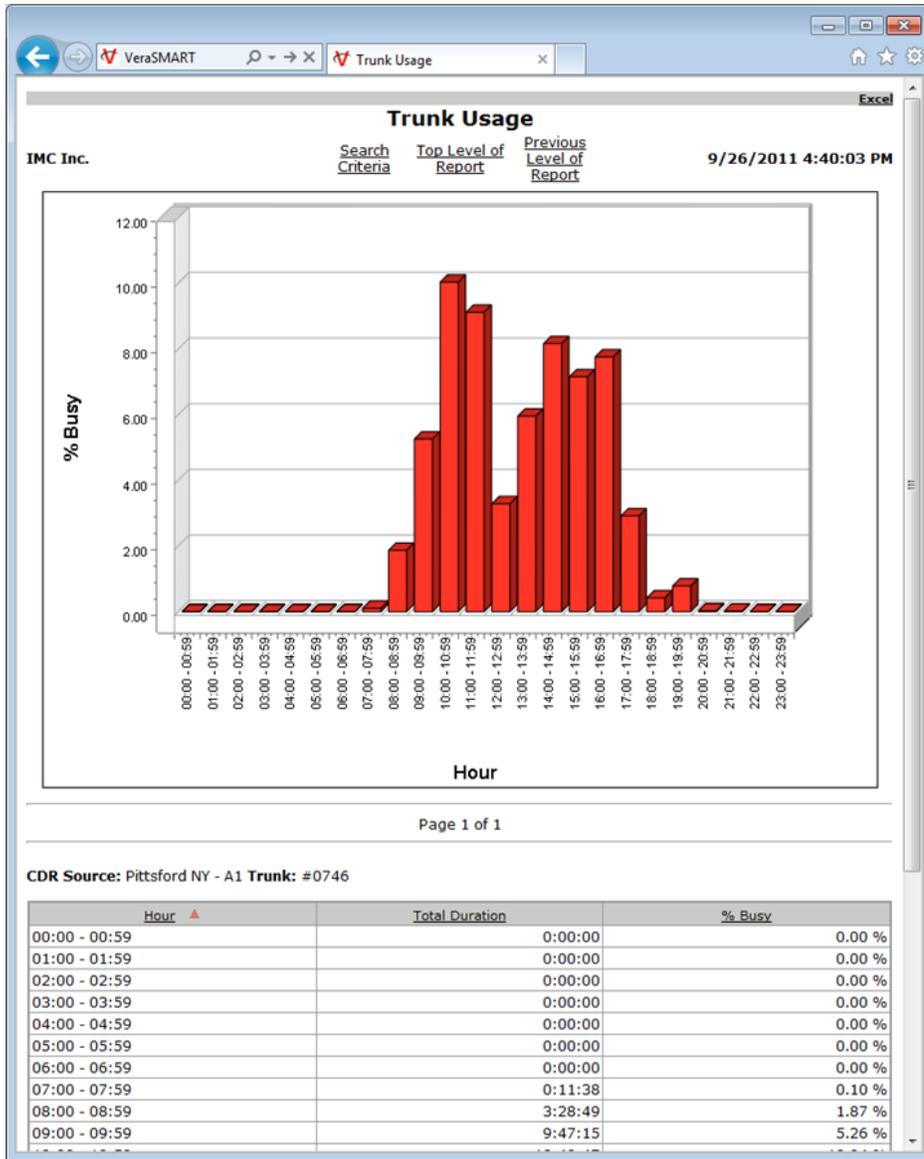
Call Accounting Use Cases

Even the simplest call accounting package can uncover potential savings in a variety of areas. Here are a few practical examples:

- Optimize the wireline network and trim expenses
- Identify opportunities for wireless savings
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Improve productivity and marketing ROI
- Protect against fraud and abuse
- Encourage responsible use
- Calculate and allocate costs

Optimize your wireline network and trim expenses

You can't manage what you can't see. Call accounting gives you visibility into your network so that you can match demand with capacity. With respect to wireline networks, trunk usage reports let you see your hour-by-hour usage, so you can



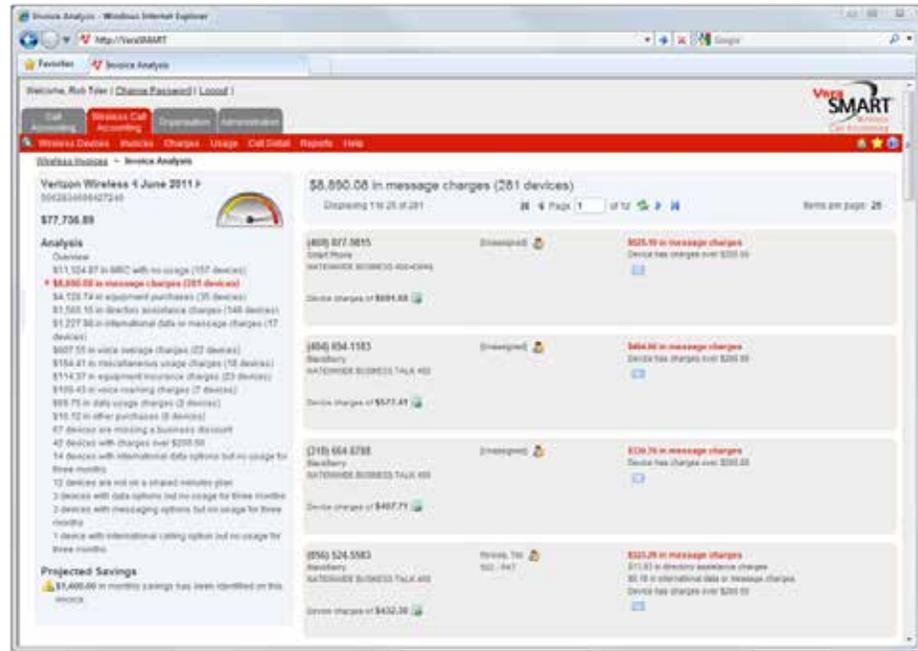
A trunk usage report tells you if your wireline network has enough capacity to handle peak traffic. If capacity is low, you'll be armed with the information you need to solve the problem.

make sure you have the right capacity to handle peak volume. The reports also show you if you have too much capacity, so you can reduce costs by eliminating unused trunks. Call accounting gives you the hard data you need to “right-size” your network and maximize the value of your telecom investment and services.

Identify opportunities for wireless savings

Wireless service providers offer a variety of services and plans. Selecting the right options for your organization can be difficult, and making the wrong choices can be an expensive mistake. Call accounting software that includes wireless invoice analysis eliminates the time spent manually reviewing wireless usage and device charge data for potential savings. Wireless invoices can be imported directly from the provider and automatically checked against configurable criteria to identify potential savings opportunities.

Wireless invoice analysis automatically checks every invoice for opportunities to save money based on your existing wireless plan and actual usage.



Examples of automatic checks performed on every wireless invoice include:

- Overage charge for anytime minutes, data usage, or messaging
- Usage charge for voice, data, or message roaming
- Usage charge for directory assistance
- Device is not on a shared charges minutes plan
- Charges for equipment, insurance, or other purchase
- Missing business discount
- Device has no usage
- No data usage, but paying for a data option
- No messaging usage, but paying for a messaging option
- No international usage, but paying for an international
- Device with total cost over threshold

Invoices that meet any of these criteria are flagged by the software. Potential savings are calculated and presented in reports or dashboards.

Increase customer satisfaction

Sales, marketing, and other departments that rely on telecommunications to serve customers benefit from the feedback that call accounting provides. For example, prompt, efficient handling of inbound customer service calls is important for maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and retention. Call accounting helps you identify problems such as insufficient call capacity at peak periods, which

could result in long call queues. Such problems can be resolved by adding lines, focusing on efficient call handling, and other solutions to improve customer service. Call accounting also provides the means of measuring the effectiveness of these solutions.

Improve productivity and marketing ROI

Call accounting lets you analyze and understand the correlation between the success of your sales and marketing efforts and related call activity. Call accounting software helps you identify the most and least effective callers, so that you can make adjustments to boost productivity and efficiency. For example, you can monitor the number of number of calls taken by your customer service team or telemarketing staff and the duration of those calls. Extension reports allow managers to compare one employee against the group and determine the productivity level of each employee.

Another valuable approach is to compare phone use by client. Are your service and support employees giving adequate attention to your high-value customers? Is too much time being spent on low-value customers?

Call accounting also helps you determine the true telecom cost of winning new business. Measure the amount of time spent on the phone vs. new business being won. Identify the real cost of selling conducted over the phone and determine the actual ROI.

The ROI of marketing and advertising programs is challenging to track. With call accounting, you simply direct inquiries to a specific extension and track all the incoming calls. This gives you hard data to make a case for the effectiveness of your marketing efforts.

Tracking emergency calls...a true story

Call accounting software lets you set up Call Alerts to notify you of inbound or outbound calls to specific numbers, such as emergency services. These alerts can deliver more than business value, as one Calero customer recently discovered.

An employee in distress at work dialed 911...and hung up before giving full details to the 911 operator. The 911 operator knew what company the call came from, but not what extension. Fortunately, the company had set up a Call Alert for outbound 911 calls, and they were able to quickly track the call to its source. They located the employee in time to administer life-saving medical care.

Crack down on network abuse, security threats, and harassing calls

Call accounting software can be configured to alert the systems administrator when wireline call metrics fall outside the boundaries of what has been defined in the system of normal calling activity. For example, excessive calling, calling flagged numbers, long distance or international calling without proper authorization – all of these activities can trigger threshold alerts. These alerts can be sent by email; or a report can be printed immediately upon completion of any suspicious call. Rapid access to this information allows the organization to take prompt, appropriate action.

With today's relatively inexpensive wireline rates, employees are seldom "written up" for occasional personal calls. Unfortunately, misuse of the telephone often involves more consistent and substantial abuse – adding up to hours of lost productivity. That's when having the documentation provided by a call accounting system proves invaluable.

Call accounting also provides the means to track down information on calls – wireless or wireline – that are deemed threatening or suspicious after the fact. Ad hoc reports can be generated that show every call that meets specified criteria, such as source or destination number, date range, time of day, and more.

Encourage responsible use

When call accounting is introduced into an organization, telecom use tends to drop – simply because users are made more aware of their telecom habits and what they cost the organization. Call accounting encourages responsible use of telecom resources and reduces telecom spend, a good thing under any circumstances, and especially in these economic times.

Gain control over usage and costs

Call accounting software tracks telecom usage, calculates costs, and lets you assign those costs to personnel, cost centers, or other organizational units. Call accounting solutions that combine wireline and wireless capabilities give you a comprehensive and highly accurate picture of your telecom usage and spend. The cost information such a system provides supports broader telecom expense management (TEM) efforts that include invoice, sourcing, and inventory management. As part of an ongoing TEM program, call accounting provides essential visibility into telecom usage and the means to monitor and control your telecom expenses.

Conclusion

The telecom environment has changed dramatically over the years, and so has the call accounting software originally designed to monitor expensive long distance calls. While today's software still does a great job of monitoring both wireline and wireless usage, call accounting also used to optimize the telecom network, enhance corporate security, track marketing ROI, protect against security threats, fraud and abuse, increase customer satisfaction, and more.

By incorporating usage and spend data with information about organizational structure and personnel, call accounting software provides powerful cost allocation capabilities, allowing usage costs to be assigned to individuals, extensions, projects, accounts, cost centers, and other organizational units.

And recently, advanced call accounting solutions developed exciting new data visualization and discovery tools that open the door to an exciting new way of exploring and interacting with your call data. These interactive multi-dimensional visualizations let you deeply explore your data in ways never before possible. These analytics reveal connections instantly, and let you see opportunities and risks from every angle – transforming your hard work into quantifiable business insights designed to ensure future growth and success.

And that's the NEW business value of call accounting: it can provide both the WHAT and the WHY, helping telecom managers make better-informed business decisions, strategic investments, and cost-effective plans for their future communications environment.



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ABOUT CALERO

Calero Software is a leading provider of Communications Lifecycle Management solutions with a deep commitment to innovation and customer service. Calero's CLM Suite supports the full communications lifecycle (from procurement to payment) including software/services that aid Telecom Expense Management (TEM), Managed Mobility Services (MMS) and Usage Management. Calero has thousands of customers in the United States and more than 40 countries worldwide, including Fortune 1000 corporations, universities and government agencies. For more information, visit us at www.calero.com or www.call-accounting-solutions.com, or call 585.381.6000.

