

How to Sell a TEM Solution

By Trent McCracken and Troy McCracken

WHILE TELECOM expense management and telecom life cycle management are not new, agents continue to ask how to sell these solutions.

The first thing an agent must understand is that he is not selling a traditional telecom service like local, long-distance, data, wireless or conferencing. Instead of selling a commodity that most decision makers understand and are well educated on the benefits it can bring their companies, a true TEM/TLM solution is an entirely different sale.

Unlike selling traditional telecom where most of the carriers act the same and speak the same language, many of the TEM/TLM offerings are drastically different, and the agent needs to understand which components are important to his client. If presented correctly, the solution is customized to the client's needs.

Selling a TEM/TLM requires an agent to understand more than just the advantages of a new telecom service; he needs to understand how the TEM/TLM solution is going to streamline operations within the company's IT, telecom, HR and accounting departments, etc. It really requires the agent to get down into the trenches and delve into the "who, what, when, where and how" regarding the client's telecom, IT, and accounting infrastructure. By providing a solution that touches all of these departments within the company, the agent is able to go "wider and deeper" within the account.

Here are a few key things an agent must understand to be successful in selling a TEM/TLM solution:

Educate Your Client. TEM/TLM is still a "new" solution to many SMB companies and even enterprises. It is not as simple as selling a local PRI.

- Understand the TEM/TLM solution you are proposing. No TEM/TLM solution is perfect, so know the advantage and disadvantages of the solution you are proposing. Some TEM/TLM providers may have a strong inventory tool, but may be lacking in invoice visibility, auditing, or procurement. This is no different than a network carrier having a great MPLS product, but their integrated access product is not on par with its competitors.
- Thoroughly explain what your TEM/TLM solution offers. Since TEM/TLM solutions are relatively new offerings, be sure that your client does not "assume" that your solution does everything your competitor's does, or more importantly, that your competitor's solution has the same functionality as your TEM/TLM solution.
- Set the right expectation with regards to the implementation timeframes and information needed. Statistics show that many implementations often fail because the wrong expectations were set regarding the time and client information that is needed to go "live" with the solution. We were recently called by a Fortune 100 company that was, as he put it, "bleeding on the operating table" because the implementation was taking so long that they weren't seeing any return on the investment in the solution.

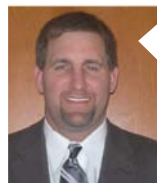
- Provide clients with case studies on how TEM/TLM solutions have helped businesses streamline telecom management and proactively audit invoices.
- Be sure that you explain how the solution may "impact" the accounting, human resources, IT, procurement, and other stakeholders that are involved in managing the telecom environment.

Exercise Caution When Migrating. An agent must be aware of the pitfalls involved in switching a client from one provider to another. It is not like converting a local PRI from one carrier to another.

- Ensure you begin with a "clean" copy of data. Client's often will tell the agent they have all the data from their existing TEM/TLM provider. However, if that data is not validated and updated, your new TEM/TLM solution may provide more functionality, but the data is going to have questionable integrity, which could be the agent's responsibility. The bottom line is bad data equals a bad migration.
- Don't allow the client to pressure you into a "rolling" migration. The setup is crucial to the success of the migration. An agent needs to get all of the client data, invoices and inventory ready for uploading into the system. This takes time. Delays may result from gaps in knowing who has client information needed to implement a program, and carriers that don't transition billing quickly to the TEM/TLM provider. Examples of these "gaps" are carrier letters of authorization, contacts, site listings, cost allocation methods, etc. Often clients don't want to wait. The last thing the agent wants is a partial migration and then try to "catch up" after the solution is live.

Accept the Longer Sales Cycle. A TEM/TLM solution does require a longer sales cycle than most agents are accustomed to, but usually it is well worth the extra time. By conducting the "panoramic" analysis of the entire company's communications network and discussions with internal departments, agents tend to find revenue opportunities that would not have been exposed when offering a traditional telecom service.

A TEM/TLM solution sale is more complex than a transactional telecom service sale, but if done properly, an agent will gain additional credibility within the account and have the opportunity at revenue he/she didn't even know existed. Finally, if an agent isn't talking to their established clients about a TEM/TLM solution, their competitors most definitely are. +



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