

American Business Communication, Inc.

TELECOM ADVISORS AND AUDITORS "ON STEROIDS."

Telecommunications is an industry with rapid technology changes, cycles of consolidation and emerging new players, and a history of improper billing. A good telecom system is vital to virtually every company's core functions, yet many businesses are lost when it comes to choosing technology, paying the right price, and monitoring ongoing costs and benefits.

Nita Singh should know. She spent seven years in leadership positions at Allnet Communications, a long-distance company that eventually became Global Crossing. There, she realized that customers "desperately" needed an advocate to help guide them through the telecommunications minefield.

She quit her job and started American Business Communication, Inc. (ABC), out of her apartment 15 years ago. Without a client to her name, Singh got on the phone and cold-called CFOs to drum up business. She believed that internal telecommunications employees would view her as a threat, so she pitched companies' financial executives on the idea of auditing their phone bills to save them money.

After a decade and a half in business, Singh calculates that her company, now based in Maple Grove, has saved clients well over \$200 million by correcting erroneous charges and recovering retroactive credits, and by helping companies make smart decisions when selecting telecom services. Calling her firm a "telecom managed-services company," Singh assists clients with all aspects of their telecommunications, from carrier selection and procurement to expense management and legal and regulatory support.

Keeping tabs on the telecom industry is critical. Singh cites a recent report from the Aberdeen Group, a Boston technology research company, which says that 85 percent of telecom invoices are not audited, and that 7 percent to 12 percent of all telecom charges are in error. These mistakes cost companies millions of dollars a year.

ABC finds 90 percent of client telecom bills have some kind of mistake, Singh says. In one case, it found \$2.7 million in errors over the three-month period of its audit engagement. In another, it found \$1 million in overcharges on just one bill.

"The industry, from the day I got into the business, is known for its inability to bill correctly," Singh says. "If it happens to

people individually, imagine what happens in big businesses, where things like that get lost. It's a loss fraught with fraud," she adds. "People know that things get overlooked, so it's wide open, unfortunately, for unethical companies to take advantage of customers."

There are other companies that do telecommunications audits, but Singh says ABC is different—"We're like auditors on steroids"—because her firm is more holistic and evaluates a company's overall telecommunications environment. "A traditional audit says, 'You bought A but are being billed for B, and you have a situation,'" she explains. "We go deeper and say, 'You purchased A and are getting A, but should have purchased B.' We're not just looking for the low-hanging fruit."

Once an audit is complete, ABC renegotiates the company's telecom contracts, going over pricing and all other terms

and conditions to make sure they don't just favor the provider. The firm helps businesses avoid the hype about the latest technologies, and find the best deals by gathering apples-to-apples information for comparing what's available.

That's made ABC profitable every year of its existence. Singh says her company has gained every single one of its clients through referrals, and has done no advertising, but that's about to change. Earlier this year, she added a new vice president of business development to her 17 employees.

Singh maintains a generous benefits package for employees and says, "I've always believed that customers' experiences will be dictated by how someone who works for me treats them. I'm an advocate for treating employees exceptionally well. Then they will pass that experience on to the customer."



Nita Singh estimates that in 15 years of business, her company has saved others more than \$200 million in telecom expense.