



1417 Sadler Rd. #182
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
O 904.321.0483
M 904.583.3593
mprice@abilita.com
www.abilita.com/price

White Paper

Northeast Florida Financial Institution:
*Engagement to assess alternative vendors,
improve service & lower costs*

By Mark Price, Managing Consultant



Contents

Introduction	2
Initial Engagement	2
Phases 1, 2,3	2
Ongoing Engagement	4
Conclusion	4

Introduction

Over the course of the last several years, this northeast Florida based customer was experiencing a decline in customer service and responsiveness. The IT leadership team elected to engage Abilita to optimize network services, analyze historical contract compliance, assess equipment support and upgrade requirements, and evaluate alternative carrier options. The financial institution has 17 locations, broken out by branches, headquarters and administrative support locations and utilized a single vendor solution for its MPLS based voice and data network services as well as multiple PRI's for local and long distance voice services. The institution also utilized a single vendor for wireless services, and while not having any support issues, elected to have Abilita audit wireless usage as well.

Initial Engagement

An engagement is broken out into three phases. The initial phase is to learn how the organization uses telecom, and conduct a forensic audit of all telecom and IT related services. This results in Phase 1, a report and corresponding read-out of our findings. Phase 2 is the implementation of any recommendations. Phase 3 is compliance.

Phase 1

Phase 1 started with the collection of the financial institution's invoice and usage activity for dedicated and analog voice services, long distance, wireless devices, support agreements, internet, equipment and WAN network. Almost all of this data was obtained directly from service providers. Our team then loaded this data into Abilita's software program completing a master inventory of services. Over the next several months, Abilita conducted a detailed analysis of services identifying how the financial institution might optimize its network to lower costs. This effort includes reviewing invoices for accuracy, reviewing contract status and compliance, and studying what features are in use compared to business needs (landline and wireless). Additionally, the team invited several vendors to submit proposals to the financial institution. After several rounds with prospective vendors, the financial institution agreed that the proposal effort would move forward with one alternative provider and the incumbent provider as the two network solution options. In both cases, Abilita engaged senior management in an effort to ensure both providers presented a comprehensive and competitive proposal.

The audit and optimization components were completed concurrent with the development of network proposals. Abilita was very successful in identifying services that were no longer required by the financial institution and then communicating the updated network requirements to the alternative providers ensuring both proposals were optimized to the needs of the business. The vendor selection process was very detailed, with numerous meetings validating requirements as well as implementation plans. The cost breakdown for both alternatives was continually studied and multiple rounds continued to show improved expense reductions. The purpose of the very detailed proposal process was to allow the financial institution to have two completely vetted and viable alternatives.

After completing the audit, Abilita scheduled and presented the findings to the CIO and VP of Network Services. During the course of the audit, Abilita was able to recover a significant amount of money as a result of prior contract compliance issues. The Phase 1 presentation covered two primary areas, network/inventory optimization and vendor selection.

Phase 2

After presenting the findings, the CIO and the VP of Network Services agreed to implement all of Abilita’s network optimization recommendations as well as chose to stay with the incumbent carrier. Abilita developed a project plan to complete the new and updated services to be implemented. The savings the financial institution realized were across the board, i.e. lower costs for data (internet and MPLS network), long distance, wireless, and cost reduction from eliminating services no longer required.

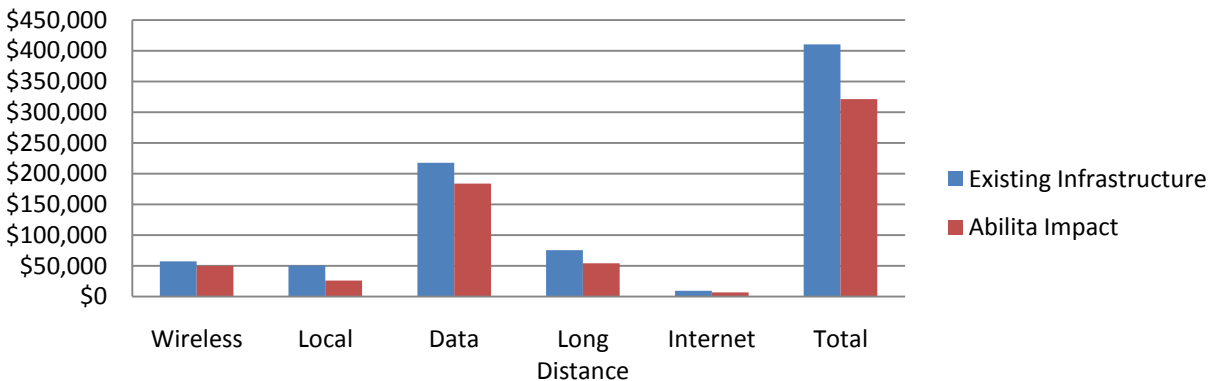
Even though the financial institution stayed with the incumbent carrier, the new agreement called for several circuit conversions, LD and Local PRI’s, as well as new contract pricing for all other services. The Abilita team worked to ensure the cut-over went as smoothly as possible, the contract pricing was implemented correctly and the old services were removed from service in a timely fashion. The implementation of circuits and new contracts were completed over the course of about six months.

The financial institution had a number of wireless devices, comprised of data cards, smart phones and non-smart phones. Abilita worked with the incumbent provider to optimize their plans, providing a reduction in costs.

Phase 3

During the time required to complete the recommendations, the team worked closely with the supplier to validate and ensure accurate pricing. In this case, most of the pricing was updated accurately, however a couple of services were not and Abilita worked to get this corrected. The wireless updates were completed quickly, and the corresponding billing changes were implemented on-time. Under Abilita’s contingency process, Abilita partners with our clients over twenty-four months. During this interval, the Abilita team continues to validate accurate invoice activity and report on savings that were a result of the optimization process as well as new opportunities to optimize services and costs.

Cost Benefits - Annual Expense



Ongoing Engagement

Abilita's process, under a contingency effort, is to support our clients ongoing communications' needs. The team provides support on multiple platforms. In regularly analyzing the clients' invoice activity, Abilita is in a position to validate accurate billing every period and report on those findings. This also allows the team to identify new ways to improve the cost structure as both costs change and usage evolves. Wireless is the most fluid of services within the communications portfolio. By engaging with clients, Abilita can continue to monitor and update their wireless portfolio to take advantage of the most recent billing options and ensure that the mix of devices and plans is optimal. This includes supporting the clients' needs in managing devices, ordering new services/devices and disconnecting unnecessary lines. Additionally, the Abilita team will advocate for clients with their service providers, providing a comprehensive vendor management solution. Working with your Abilita team, rather than directly with your vendors, will save your organization valuable time.

Conclusion

The engagement with the financial institution is a successful one. Measured by savings realized, heightened level of support and an ongoing validation process, the positive results are measurable. The audit, from start to implementation of recommendations, was about six months. However, the financial institution now enjoys a lower cost structure that will keep downward pressure on costs ongoing. One of the biggest challenges with this effort was getting the incumbent carrier to marshal the needed resources to properly prepare and vet a viable proposal. By engaging senior level contacts, Abilita was able to obtain the support needed to ensure a positive outcome. The implementation for the most part went smoothly, and where there were challenges, Abilita ran point to get them resolved quickly.

When an organization is serious about assessing ways to streamline costs, the Abilita solution can be a key component. Often, expenses as a standalone issue are not the driving factor to engage Abilita. Issues such as new technology, contract status and vendor performance are issues that get a dialogue started. The Abilita team brings an independent, vendor neutral perspective to solutions emphasizing what is best in your environment and best meets the needs of the business.

The recommendations the Abilita team implemented for the financial institution were customized for their environment. Factors such as current and alternative providers, performance and cost considerations drove the discussion and ultimate decisions on network architecture. The recommendations were presented as a set of alternative options the organization was provided in an effort to lower operating costs and optimize services. The recommendations and cost/network optimization for your organization will be 100% specific to your environment and organizational needs. No two engagements are the same.

Abilita telecommunications consultants provide full service telecom consulting solutions for clients across North America who are looking to achieve greater cost efficiencies and improved performance for all of their telecom needs and projects – **voice, data, wireless and IT related equipment.**



Mark Price
1417 Sadler Rd. #182
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
O - 904.321.0483
M - 904.583.3593
mprice@abilita.com
www.abilita.com/price