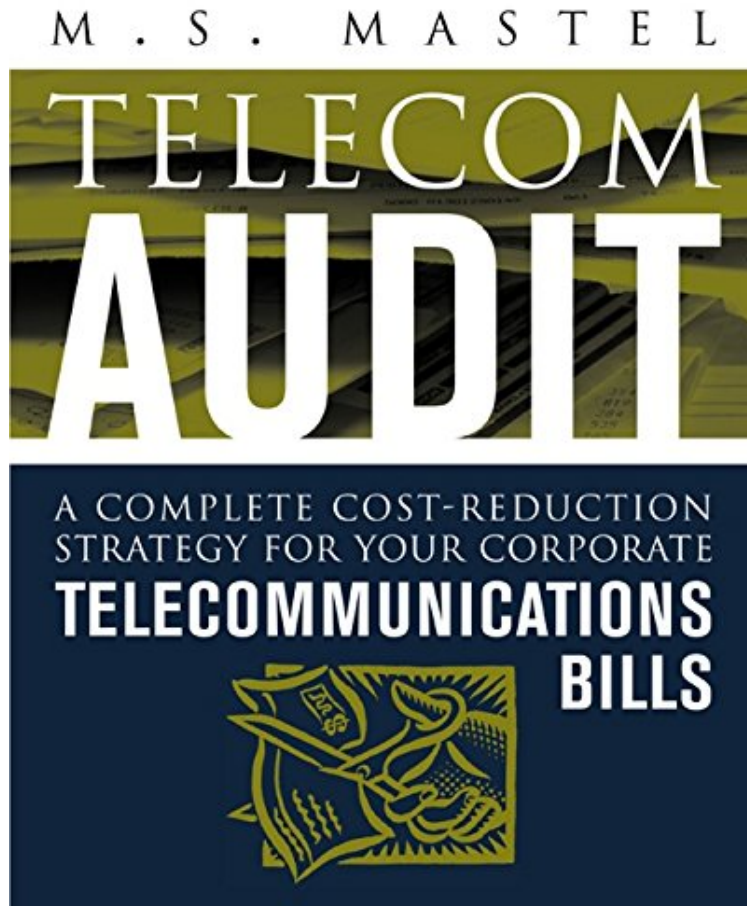


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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great Place To StartBy J. AshtonThis book is very good for a starting point and covers many areas of Telecommunications along with look into complete cost savings of your Telecommunications. You can get some great information from this book. Most companies find it is too hard to even attempt to decipher their Telecom bills let alone perform and audit to try and find cost savings. Read this book; if that doesn't work for you call a local Telecom professional to help you. You can find brokers these days to do all this for no charge to you.10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Good overviewBy CustomerWhile this book does not cover every possible situation, it does provide insight into those which are most relevant. It was well written and proceeds in a logical fashion. I found chapter 10, covering taxes and fees, particularly helpful. If you are new to the commercial aspects of the telecom world, this is a good place to start. I have read several books on the subject and found this one to be the most complete.

Phone systems, service, data networks, and the Internet are critical pieces of any company's communications. And most IT professionals don't understand the effects of deregulation and parallel technologies on the bottom line. Telecommunications companies have more than a 30% error rate on their billing each month. There are only about 4,000 telecom consultants in the country who do nothing but find errors on bills. The economy seems to be crying out for just this type of study. This work explores the various technologies in terms of cost and ROI, sets up some case studies to solve real communications issues, offers cheap ways to meet bandwidth requirements, looks at the players in the marketplace in terms of technology as well as cost, explains what a tariff is and how it can be made to work for you, gives a better understanding of telecom taxes, which ones are required and to what degree, and provides international strategies to manage costs of a national and global network. Reading this book will be like hiring that telecom consultant.

- SAVINGS!!! — realize 40-60% savings with the information contained in the book
- "Show me the money" demo included
- Review — assessing bills to know if you're overpaying
- Analysis — benchmarking, comparative technologies, ROI, tariff info, etc.
- Negotiation — how to work with your various services to ensure you're getting the best rates possible
- Cost Justification — finding costs in other areas to justify expenditure in technology
- Vendor Management — understanding where and how to go to get the best price
- Recovery of capital — finding out if and when you've overpaid, and getting back \$ when it's due
- Tax Rebates, Relocations, Growth Assessment, and Telemanagement — exploring all the angles to get the most of your telecom dollars

/interview by Mitch Betts Hundreds of pages of complex telecommunications bills land on the desk of some overworked IT staffer every month. And if they "look normal," they get paid. But auditors say those bills are full of mistakes that typically result in overcharges of 5% to 35%. Meanwhile, many users fail to get the best terms in their telecommunications contracts. At a time when cost reduction is king and the telecom industry is in turmoil, Mitch Betts asked Missy Sue Mastel, author of *Telecom Audit* (McGraw-Hill, 2003), what IT managers should do. These are tough times in the telecommunications industry. Is now a good time to renegotiate long-distance telecom contracts? Yes. You want to improve not just your rates but the terms and conditions, too. Your contracts were probably negotiated during the economic glory days, and some don't have clauses for business downturns or rightsizing or billing verification. You may be able to get more competitive rates ... but the rates aren't really where [the telecom carriers] get you. Where they get you is in fees and surcharges. Some carriers have significantly higher fees or surcharges for ordering an 800 line, for example; it may be free with one carrier and \$50 a month at another. Are too many contracts left in the filing cabinet unexamined? Yes, indeed. Companies may think it's someone's job to pull the contract out and take a look at it, but given the [staff] downsizing today, there's not time to actually do it. The contract could be 90 pages. And the bills could be 1,100 pages for a \$30,000-per-month customer. You should negotiate into your contract a period of review. And you should negotiate billing verification into the contract, so you're not spending an average of 18 to 21 months to get credits back for overcharges. It should be a much shorter period of time. You should expect the carrier to provide accurate billing practices and, if not, they should correct it within 30 to 60 days. And you should be reviewing your bills and comparing them to your contract terms once every quarter, if not more. Sometimes the rates and terms negotiated in the contract don't actually show up on the bill. What are some common billing mistakes? "Casual billing" is the worst. Long-distance carriers can lose track of phone numbers and instead of billing the call under the corporate contract, it falls off the contract and gets billed at astronomical rates by the local carrier. It happens to large corporate customers a lot, unfortunately. It's a billing system error. The billing systems are incredibly complex, full of interfaces and patches to deal with new features and services. Most large phone companies have computer systems that are 10 to 15 years old, and they lose track of things. The phone companies invest in patches but not in overhauling the systems. I've also heard reports that you can discontinue a service, such as a T1 line, but it can still show up on the bill. That certainly happens; it's human error if they don't properly enter the disconnect order so it shows up in the billing system. But get this: Sometimes they discontinue only one point of a two-point circuit. So you could still be charged for the other point, perhaps at an office you've closed. What are the best money-saving strategies, the low-hanging fruit? Billing increments. Any time you can reduce your billing increment, say, from one-minute billing to a six-second increment, you save about 30% on the usage portion of your bill. If you have a three-minute conversation and your rate is 5 cents a minute, you pay 15 cents. The problem is that even if you talk two minutes and one second, you're still billed for three minutes and still paying 15 cents for that call. If you're billed at six-second increments, you're only paying about 11 cents. In addition, there are about 17,000 taxes from different jurisdictions that apply to telecommunications, and the carriers have a tough time dealing with it. The laws are incredibly ambiguous, and we've been successful interpreting the law in favor of our [corporate] clients. For example, the federal excise tax covers toll service [typically voice service], but it shouldn't really apply to networks that aren't toll service. So most data networks -- where you're just paying for bandwidth, not usage -- shouldn't have the federal excise tax applied. Yet it happens all the time. Are companies starting to get better control over their wireless costs, or is it still the Wild West out there? Even if they are getting it under control, it will all change in November. Cellular

number portability is coming out Thanksgiving, and it's going to be an absolute madhouse. The carriers will do just about anything to get customers to sign a contract so they don't leave them in November. The carriers are all terrified. If you're renegotiating a contract, you can pin them to the wall. Customers have a lot of leverage, so take advantage of that to get free equipment or upgrades to your equipment in a multiyear contract. Do you expect to see more consolidation in the telecom industry? Yes, there will be more bankruptcies, among smaller players. I expect to see price increases for another 12 to 15 months, but then I bet we'll see the FCC clamp down on pricing and make the carriers reduce their fees and surcharges. (Computerworld 2003-07-28)From the Back CoverSLASH YOUR COMPANY'S TELECOM EXPENSE mdash; WITHOUT CUTTING SERVICE! Statistics reveal that many telecommunications companies have more than a 30 percent error rate on the monthly bills they send to customers ndash; and may be overbilling their customers by thousands of dollars each month! That's why if overseeing your company's telecom expenditure is part of your work, Telecom Audit is the book you need to neutralize those discrepancies ndash; and dramatically reduce your business's overhead without reducing service. Written with insight by a noted telecommunications expert, Telecom Audit: A Complete Cost-Reduction Strategy for Your Corporate Telecommunication Bills takes you step by step through the processes that will help you analyze your existing and potential systems, identify excessive charges, and act to minimize cost. With Telecom Audit, you'll learn to: * Assess bills to find out if you're overpaying * Conduct ROI analyses for your communications systems * Negotiate with service providers and vendors for the best prices * Find costs in other areas to justify your technology expenditure * Locate the right technologies and vendors to match your business's unique needs * Grasp the effects of deregulation, taxes, tariffs, and parallel technologies on your bottom line * And much, much more! Perfect for all IT and financial professionals charged with implementing telecom systems at their companies, Telecom Audit helps you maximize the efficiency and ROI for your telecom expenditure, whether your network runs around the block mdash; or around the world.About the AuthorMissy Sue Mastel, CPA is the President/Founder of Mass-Tel Communications, a company that helps corporations optimize their telecommunications budget. Since its establishment less than five years ago, Mastel's company has saved and refunded client businesses more than \$6 million in telecom costs and has helped three international telecommunications service providers to expand their market and improve their customer service. A resident of San Francisco, CA, Ms. Mastel holds degrees in accounting, international business management, and theology from Georgetown University and is a member of the AICPA and the California Association of Accounting Professionals. She is an alumna of KPMG and is certified by numerous telecom agencies and service providers throughout the world.