Telecom Wish List 2000

If you could put together a wish list for your department, what would be on that list? This question was asked on the listserv recently, and here are some of your responses. We wanted you to think creatively, and you didn't let us down!

- Dave Ostrom, Washington State Univ
  - A new billing system which would create invoices that are understood by all customers.
- International rates that would be competitive with the open market rates that students can obtain.
- Enough Internet bandwidth to withstand anything our customers attempt.

If I were in line with the telecoms, at the end of the year I'd have to tell my boss that I don't need any more money or additional head count. The number of people we have is sufficient but they do not have the skills or experience to satisfy the demands of our customers.

- Larry Maughan, Salt Lake Comm. Coll.
  - I'd love to have my own money machine. Then funding would no longer be an issue and I could afford to hire (and keep) all of the best techs.

- Dan Tonelli, Brandeis Univ.
  - I'd wish for additional staff that had experience with telecom and desktop computers (Mac and PC), understood regulatory matters, had great customer service skills, and only asked for a decent wage!

- Anne Apicella, Univ. of New Mexico
  - What I really want is to provide the best guidance I can to my staff and the university as technologies and organizations merge. I want to be sure we make the right choices and make the right investments that will provide us with quality service and a customer focus, to name two—and should play a vital role in the new hierarchy.

Once I've accomplished that, I want a prosperous, healthy, and happy retirement!

- George Ahlenius, Illinois College of Optometry

5. That my vendors could get the bid/contact right by the second time.
4. That invoices came mistake free.
3. That users actually read the manuals.
2. That I would hear at least one "thank you" for every 10 complaints.
1. That the challenges make me more eager to learn.

- Dick Johnson, Metropolitan Comm. College

Wisdom
- Michael Bonafair, Shippensburg Univ.
  - A 28-hour day
  - A retirement window for 16 years
As we begin a new year and a new century (I'm told the new millennium actually begins with 2001), it seems appropriate to look at some of the work force trends that will impact (1) us in our careers, as we seek new professional opportunities, and (2) our positions within higher education, as we compete for new employees and attempt to retain current staff.

**Shortage of Skilled Telecom/IT Professionals**

As I have previously noted, the shortage of skilled telecom/IT professionals will continue well into the 21st century. This alone will present all of us with enormous challenges as we attempt to recruit and retain staff. A major development, at least in the corporate world, is a return to an increased emphasis on elaborate soft benefit packages as part of a comprehensive compensation package. This time, however, the benefit packages are targeted at the very same telecom/IT professionals that we all compete for on our campuses.

Subsidized housing, condos that are wired to the company offices, substantial home office allowances, paid athletic and country club memberships, company provided and/or paid child care and elder care, and sabbaticals are all becoming common elements in the benefit packages offered to skilled telecom/IT professionals.

Some of the critical questions we will need to find answers for include:

- What can we offer potential employees that will differentiate our working environment from that of the corporate world?
- How do we create a truly challenging yet productive and enjoyable work environment?
- What kinds of systems can we develop within our institutions to encourage retention?

**Telecommuting**

The second work force trend that will impact our institutions and us is the continued movement to telecommuting. While some of our institutions have experimented with telecommuting, these experiments have been mainly targeted at accommodating key staff during periods when being on-site is not possible.

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**From the President**

**Tony Mordosky**

**Bradley University**

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Pricing Discussions May Result in Heavy Fines

From time to time, questions appear on the ACUTA listserv regarding prices for services at different institutions. While asking such questions may seem harmless, ACUTA discourages this activity because of the potential for serious legal and financial repercussions. In a recent issue of the newsletter of the Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors-International (ACCED-I), attorney William Walters III, of the law firm of Walters & Joyce P.C., advised members of that organization to refrain from discussing prices on the listserv or even in private conversations. This is good advice for ACUTA members as well. According to Walters, "Federal and state antitrust laws prohibit any agreements among competitors which result in a restraint of trade. Examples of such restraints include price fixing, bid rigging, group boycotts or refusals to deal. An agreement among competitors to 'fix' or 'establish' a price for goods or services is often prosecuted as a criminal violation with fines of up to $10,000,000 for institutions and $350,000 for individuals. In addition, private parties can collect triple damages and attorneys' fees. Proving such anticompetitive 'agreements' is not very difficult. As a result, antitrust counselors advise competitors to never discuss the prices they charge for products or services. "For example, if one ACCED-I member posts, discusses, or mentions its pricing structure (wherever the exchange takes place) and another member changes its price (whether or not it actually 'agreed' with the other ACCED-I member), both members are exposed to potential antitrust claims. Those claims can be brought by federal or state enforcers as well as by private parties (i.e., persons contracting for the conference facilities). This is why antitrust counselors advise their clients not to discuss the subject with competitors."

Addressing the issue of private conversations, Walters advised, "Private conversations do not change the application of the law. Competitors should not discuss prices with one another—period. It is NOT OK to have responses shared between individuals or to have 'private conversations' concerning prices. If those individuals are competitors or representatives of competitors, the antitrust risk remains the same. In fact, it may even be higher."

ACUTA LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

D C Update

CLECs

The Telecom Manager's Voice Report (VR) recently provided significant coverage of the use of CLECs, describing savings in local service costs ranging from 20% to as much as 40%. They mention one school district in Detroit which was offered a 20% lower rate by a CLEC and then the LEC cut its rate by 17%. However, they suggest that discounts are more likely to be in the single digit range.

VR recommends that organizations plan

Big 3 LDs to provide national DA to businesses at one third to half the price," says U./tech president Linda Jacobs, "generally 65¢ per call."

"Universities are among u./tech's biggest clients," says Jacobs. "Students and faculty are notorious users of directory assistance." VR notes that there are no other fees to use the service and it is available to any college or university on a month-to-month basis regardless of its carriers. Many Web sites provide free DA,

The latest edition of the "ACUTA Legislative and Regulatory Update," an electronic newsletter based on a monthly report by the Washington law firm of Wiley, Rein & Fielding, is now available to members only on the ACUTA Web site. Here are the stories you will read about in this edition:

- Commission Releases UNE Remand Order
- Commission Adopts xDSL Resale Rules
- Commission Adopts Line Sharing Rules
- DOJ Weighs In Against Bell Atlantic Application
- MCI/Sprint File FCC Merger Application
- TRA Challenges Ameritech-SBC Condition
- Commission Announces Decision on E-911 Cost Recovery
- FCC Announces Numbering Consensus
very carefully before changing from one local carrier to another to be sure that
the service provided by the new carrier is the same or better than that provided by
the other. Also, if the new carrier is obtaining services that they are providing
to the customer from the old carrier, the relationship between the two
carriers must be such that the customer's needs will be met quickly
with the carriers working together to solve the problems.

VR notes a number of cases where the carriers seemed to be at odds with each
other, and problems with the link between the carriers were slow to
be resolved. The old finger pointing
game shows up too often.

One suggested way to investigate a
change in local carrier is to let a potential
new carrier have copies of three or four
months' bills from the current carrier in
order to make an estimate of what their
bill would be. In some cases the current
carrier has cut rates upon finding out
that the customer is looking around for
alternatives.

A few suggestions made in VR:
- Watch for two-year voice deals that
  include a three-year deal on equipment
- Beware of hidden charges
- Make carriers give rates based on one
  computation method
- Require a 30-day out clause in your
  contract.

Directory Assistance

Many ACUTA members have experi-
enced frustration with directory
assistance (DA). According to VR (10/
11/99), U./technologies, a company in Ft.
Worth, Texas, has agreements with "the

including: www.infospace.com,
www.switchboard.com,
www.anywho.com, www.dogpile.com,

This is only one side of the DA
problem and does not prevent people calling in to the university
from getting bad numbers, but it may
be a step in the right direction.

Bell Atlantic—LD in New York

In spite of opposition by the DoJ to the
application by Bell Atlantic to
provide long distance service within the
state of New York, as noted by Jeff and
Ken, the FCC authorised the service. This
is the first such request that the FCC has
approved since passage of the Telecom-
munications Act of 1996. The FCC
commissioners all voted in favor of this
service. Bell Atlantic must continue to
comply with the checklist requirements,
and the Commission has a number of
enforcement tools at its disposal,
including imposing penalties or suspend-
sion of approval. The checklist is part of
section 271 of the Act of 1996.

Billing Fraud

The state of Tennessee fined MCI
Worldcom $1.3 million "for falsely telling
customers that a monthly 'National
Access Fee' is listed under the 'Taxes and
Surcharges' portion of its bills is man-
dated by the FCC." They also noted that
there were 23 states that have filed suit
over such billing notices. (VR 12/6)

Voice over IP and E911

There is a problem trying to pinpoint
the location of the caller if they are using
voice over IP and making an emergency
call to E911. The issue of calls from a
cellular phone is still not completely

solved and now this new problem is
under consideration. Anyone using voice
over IP should remember that he will
have to give his location in order to get
help when calling E911. (VR 12/6)

Legislative/Regulatory Update

Hopefully, you have seen the first two
issues of the ACUTA Legislative/
Regulatory Update based on materials
prepared especially for ACUTA. Mem-
bers may access this information via the
Web site or may get copies by calling the
ACUTA office. The items covered in the
second issue are listed above.
Up On the Rooftop: Antennas Anyone?

About this time last year, Ken Leverington from the University of Arkansas (kenl@uafsysb. uark.edu) sent a message to the ACUTA lisserve saying that a company wanted to install a pcs antenna on top of one his buildings. He wanted input from other ACUTA members and asked two questions:

1. What is the policy of your institution re the installation of antenna(s) on your buildings by an outside company?
2. Can you give me any words of wisdom about what I should include in any contract/agreement?

In response to his inquiry, Anne Apicella, University of New Mexico (apicella@unm.edu), wrote:

“At UNM, we have two cellular carrier antenna installations on campus, and installation of an antenna repeater is pending. Each installation is slightly different, but all have been successful for us.

“The first was installed on top of our fine arts center in 1995. Before we allowed them to install the antenna, we checked with all the other cellular carriers (at the time) to find out if anyone else also wanted to position an antenna at the same site. No one else did. The carrier produced photo simulations of the installation so we could obtain prior approval from the university architect and others who were concerned about the aesthetics.

“The carrier made the antenna arrays look like canales (water spouts), which is a typical architectural feature on southwestern adobe-style buildings. Their common equipment was installed in a small building addition added by the carrier. We submeter the power, read the meter each month, and bill them accordingly. They also pay us a handsome rent for the use of our property.

“The second antenna was installed late last year by the local PCS vendor. They installed the actual antenna array on an existing power company pole in public right-of-way next to my building. You have to look hard to see it. They installed their common equipment behind an unlabeled door at the rear of my building. They drew...
their power from the service on the utility pole, so we
don't have a metering issue. They pay us handsome rent
for their walled equipment area.

“We are currently processing a request from this same
carrier to install a repeater on top of our chemistry
building. They have submitted photo simulations of the
installation for our approval. The installation will look
like a small addition on existing duct work. The power
consumption of the repeater is negligible, so we have
just figured out our fee per KWH and have added it to
the monthly lease rate. They will pay us the same
handsome rent for use of the rooftop space.

“This has been a successful venture for us, and it
provides a healthy income stream. They are welcome
tenants. And the antennas boost the cellular signal for
users on campus, which is a plus.

“As a state institution, our biggest concerns were the
contract terms and conditions. We have a standard
lease agreement that we have used for all the installa-
tions which I would be happy to share with you if you
would like. Your attorneys might save some time if they
use an existing contract to start with.

“A couple of suggestions:

“1. Have the carrier show you via photo simulations of
what the installation will look like before approving the
installation. This will give you assurance that the
installation won't be discordant with your institution's
architecture. (I'm sure we've all seen some pretty
gruesomely ugly cellular antenna installations!)

“2. Don't give anything away. Make sure they are
compensating you for all expenses (i.e., power) and use
of your property.

“3. Don't lock yourself in for too long a term. Give
yourself an opportunity to renew at reasonable
intervals. The carriers want to lock you in forever
because they want to protect their investment, but the
institution may need to do something different with its
real estate assets in the future, so you need a way out.

President's Message
(continued from page 1)

With the continued evolution of the Internet into a
reliable, worldwide communication infrastructure, the
nature of telecommuting will change. No longer will we
view telecommuting as merely a domestic trend; we will
need to acknowledge and view it internationally. Your
network manager will be able to monitor your network
from New Delhi, Amsterdam, Sao Paulo, Maine, or
California as easily as from your own campus.

We will need to decide for what telecom/IT functions
we can utilize telecommuters. Does programming a
faculty member's phone with new features require an
onsite technician?

Telecommuters will be able to market their skills around
the U.S. and the world. Competing for these talents will
require us to analyze how we integrate the telecom-
muter into our organizations. This change will require a
renewed emphasis on and give new meaning to the term
'team building.' Yet finding ways to make these
telecommuters feel like a part of your institution's team
will be essential to attracting and retaining them.

Service 24/7

Possibly the most challenging trend for us in higher
education will be the firm establishment of the 24-hour
society. The traditional workday, 8 or 9 to 5, is already
obsolete. According to the latest figures from the U.S.
Census Bureau, fewer than 33% of American workers
have such a work schedule. Yet a disproportionate
number of telecom/IT professional and technical staff
members still work this traditional shift.

For many of our organizations, our prime service
delivery hours are from 8 to 5. Changing this model to
reflect the demand of potential staff to work alternative
hours will surely challenge us in many ways. One can
only imagine attempting to manage the expectation of
our users that we will service their request between 8
and 5, when in reality we may provide the requested
service at 3:00 a.m.

Are our institutions prepared to address the needs of a
24-hour society? Are we as telecom/IT professionals
prepared to lead and manage organizations that
routinely work a nontraditional schedule? Can we
transform our organization into 24-hour service
providers to effectively take advantage of the telecom/
IT staff who choose not work in a traditional 8 to 5
environment?

While these work force trends may find their way into
higher education at a somewhat slower pace than into
the corporate workplace, there is no question in my
mind that we need to recognize and prepare for them.

As always, I welcome your comments anytime at
morskoy@bradley.edu.

Joke, Hoax, or the Real Thing?

You receive a suspicious message via e-mail, and you
want to check it out. Where do you turn for accurate, up-
to-the-minute information about what is and what isn't
capable of destroying your hard drive or carrying out
some other threat? Try one of these Web pages:

- http://kumite.com/myths/home.htm
- http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html
From ACUTA Headquarters

ACUTA Headquarters Is Computer-Ready

As I write this column it is still the week before Christmas, and many ACUTA members are on pins and needles about Y2K—although most of the telecom and IT professionals in our membership are relatively certain that everything within their spans of control will be Y2K-OK. It seems as though most of the near-panic is coming from outside the telecom/IT departments. It will be fascinating to watch the ACUTA listserv as midnight rolls through the various time zones, to see the reports from various campuses. (That is assuming my dial-up connection is working that night!) If you were on duty that night, I hope the pizza or other snacks were good, you enjoyed your coworkers’ company, and you didn’t have to sleep on the floor!

The ACUTA headquarters office recently completed an upgrade of the majority of hardware and software used to manage the operations of the association. Staff members received new computer workstations to replace hardware that was five years old and at capacity. The hard drive in our NT server was doubled in storage capacity and the memory was increased, and our backup system’s capacity was increased by 50%.

The association management database software was upgraded to a much-improved and Y2K-compliant system, and our daily productivity software was also upgraded to current and Y2K-compliant versions.

In addition, our telephone and voice mail systems were upgraded, both for Y2K compliance and because we had outgrown the number of available ports. We have also increased our Internet connection from 384K to a full T1. This is the members’ pipeline to the ACUTA Web site, and our staff’s pipeline for e-mail and Web access. Thanks to recently increased competition among local service providers in the Lexington market, we were able to accomplish this within the current budget.

I believe that we are well-equipped now to meet the needs of our membership organization for at least the next three years. With annual software updates and the implementation of a four-year hardware replacement cycle, we will ensure that currency is maintained.

All of these upgrades were the result of visionary leadership of the Board of Directors, who recognized long ago that ACUTA must remain current in its use of technology in order to meet the rapidly increasing need of members for information and services. Through the hard work and contributions of many individuals from our Institutional and Corporate Affiliate members, and the entire staff team, we are financially sound and able to make these investments. Personally, I am excited to be working in such a forward-thinking environment with the enthusiastic support of members who are so appreciative of the association’s efforts!

Wish List (continued from page 1)

♦ Ed Mathay, Claremont Univ. Center
I wish for a clear, concise explanation of why VoIP is not free and not ready for prime time.

♦ Edward Lear, Northern KY Univ.
Just let me do the job you hired me to do.

♦ Tim Casey, Skidmore College
Never mind a pear tree, how about more technician elves!

♦ Ken Soper, George Washington Univ.
1. Recognition from University Compensation Department that the technology staff
money for our departments either.

♦ Rick Bull, East Stroudsburg Univ.
A billing system-software/company that does what they say it will do.

A way of rewarding people who have done a good job or done more than their job.

A way of stopping vendors from billing unauthorized calls.

Increased understanding of the computer service department that telecommunication is important.

Increased automation of services so that a
Institutional Members
• Calif. State Univ., Office of Chancellor, Long Beach, CA. Mary Ann Rodriguez, 562/951-4050. T1
• Cheyney Univ. of Pennsylvania, Cheyney, PA. Rose Harper, 610/399-2401. T1

Corporate Affiliate Members
Copper Level
Archi-Technology provides Web-based design and documentation services for telecommunication infrastructures based on Division 17 Organization Model and new T Series Drawings. Deliverables are provided in CSI-formatted specifications and scaled CAD drawings.

Director of Telephone Services, University of Alabama
Contact: Carolyn Horan or Ingrid Goree, The University of Alabama in Huntsville, Staff Employment Office, Madison Hall 135, Huntsville, AL 35899. Phone 256/890-6381; fax 256/890-6908. UAH, EO/AE

Asst. Director, User Services, Central Missouri State University
Contact: CMSU, Human Resources, ADM 190, Warrensburg, MO 64093

Telecommunications Manager, Colleges/OIT, Johnson City, TN
Contact: fax 407/660-8008 or e-mail kcato@collegis.com. Attn: Kyle Cato

ITS Help Desk Manager, New York University
Contact: Ken Fauerbach, Director-ITS Client Services, 251 Mercer St. Rm. 323, New York, NY 10003 Phone: 212/992-9299, fax: 212/995-4929; e-mail: ken.fauerbach@nyu.edu

Director of Telecommunications, Valparaiso University
Contact: Office of Human Resources, Valparaiso University, O.P. Kretzmann Hall, Valparaiso, IN 46383-6493; Phone 219/464-5214; fax 219/464-6887; e-mail Julie.Martinez@valpo.edu. EOE

trying to establish a charge for data network services.
• Elwyn Hull, UT Southwestern Med Ctr.
Complete, accurate, understandable, and error-free billing from the carriers.
• Vivien Oxley, Andrews Univ.
I think my department would benefit by more personnel to do the routine tasks so my time could be spent in reading more to try to keep abreast of the changes in telecommunications, both legally and technologically.
I’m sure none of us would turn down more larger amount of work would not be manual work.
• Elizabeth Williams, Keene State Collage
I suppose if you’re saying to ask for the moon, I would want a top-of-the-line new switch and new e-mail system. I would want an on-campus wireless system for phone. I would like to replace all the old underground cabling with new fiber to all buildings. I would have a phone per pillow. I would have the best CDR program and the staff to support it. I would also have a great desktop interface for both the brand new switch and for the wonderful new e-mail system. An expert technician would knock on my door and say s/he wants to work for me—forever.

On the billing side, there would be one bottom line for the hardware and one for the network. That means having a provider who could hand it all to us in one package, local, LD, 800, 0 plus ... and, of course, at a reasonable rate. I guess I’m sort of saying I want to go back to a scenario before “Judge Green.” It was just easier. I realize it’s not realistic.

And service... I want a company that’s there when I call them, knows the answer to the technical questions without having to ask someone else or look it up in a book. I want the technicians who have to visit our site to know our system inside out (not look at the VM system and say “well, I’ve never worked with that kind before!”).

Well, I guess THAT’S a wish list, if I ever saw one!

Editor’s Note: Thanks to all who sent their wishes—look for more in next month’s newsletter!