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**Brian Tankersley** • Jun. 28, 2013

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Over my 20 year career, I've spent an eternity in queues for tech support from a variety of companies. As I write this, I've been on hold for 80 minutes during business hours on a weekday to speak to a human about an issue. Dealing with hardware and software support is a hidden cost of doing business in every organization.

Most organizations have an outside person who will take care of these issues for you – the sales rep. The account representative is the person who is supposed to make these problems go away for you. If you are trying to save \$10-\$20 per month on internet service, mobile telephones, and other services by not using the concierge services routinely provided to business customers, you stand to lose thousands of dollars in time dealing with problems yourself.

An example of a great account rep is my Verizon account rep, Sean. Sean is a commissioned salesperson, and since I spend a few hundred dollars a month on wireless, he takes care of me. When my phone breaks, he gets me a new one without me having to spend an hour on hold. If I'm heading out of town and have a damaged phone, he gets me a "loaner" phone I can use until mine is fixed and he sets it up for me.

Sean gets paid to make my experience with Verizon Wireless better, and has the authority to "bend" the rules to fix my problems. I can reach him 24x7x365, and he

frequently fixes things for me on the weekend between two business trips – outside of

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sometimes try services I don't think I need, but his good judgment and excellent listening skills means that almost universally, I can't live without the new service three months later. Because Sean conducts business in accordance with the Golden Rule, I never feel like I'm getting ripped off.

A contrast to Sean is one of my internet service providers, which is a "home grade" connection. This service provider is truly a nightmare. The connection becomes spotty when it rains or snows, and the whole customer experience is much more unpleasant than any dental work I've personally experienced. Their phone menu system always results in at least 30 minutes on hold, and

I saved \$20 per month with this ISP by having a home internet connection instead of a business account. Home users only have support available 12 hours a day, six days a week, versus 24x7x365 and priority service for business accounts. A few years ago, we had a storm which caused a loss of service on a Sunday night right before March 15th.

I called the provider as soon as their offices opened on Monday morning, and they politely informed me that the first time they could look into the problem was Friday afternoon. (Side note – they didn't make it to my home during the half day window five days later, and we had to reschedule for the next week). I lost more billable time working around my lack of service that week than I could have hoped to save by having the "cheaper" service for a decade. A business account and the service from a dedicated rep could have saved me hours and hours of dealing with bureaucracy.

If you have a mission-critical service like internet service, wireless communications, or telephones in a professional environment, you should get the best service level you can afford. Service outages in these critical areas are inexcusable, and put you and your firm effectively "out of business". The small amounts you pay for higher quality

service help you avoid these problems. You and your employees can more easily focus

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