# Digital invoice validation

A step forward for telecommunications service providers

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The telecommunications industry has changed drastically over the past two decades. Combined computational power with the new telecom infrastructure has ensured that the world is very well connected, leading to an increase in customer demands. To meet these requirements, telecom companies now offer diverse services including broadband, cable, satellite television, mobility services, audio and video conferencing, VPN connections, private lines, and the list goes on! This is a step change from the initial offerings of landline connections and essential mobile services. However, while diversification has meant growth, what has been its impact on telecom company processes?

## An incredibly complex billing scenario!

Unlike generating bills for just one or two products, the current quad-play service strategy has led to challenges with managing bills for a gamut of products, which continue to evolve rapidly. Additionally, global telecommunications service providers (TSP's) operating in multiple countries face geographical complexities because of different regulatory bodies, diverse procurement and purchasing rules, and varied taxation and vendor/supplier policies. These have led to several challenges related to growth decline, high customer churn and legal actions executed by suppliers or customers for inaccuracies in invoicing. It has, therefore, become imperative for telecom companies to implement an invoice validation process that verifies the accuracy of invoices before sending them out to their customers.

Previously, companies used in-house teams or work contractors to validate invoices. Typically, this was done by either using a manual process or in-house solutions or by using off-the-shelf products. However, these methods are neither efficient nor scalable and are, as such, not capable of managing the ever-increasing demands of telecom companies. Traditional methods may be costly, time-consuming, or lack adaptability and hence required customization. There is a need for telecom companies to revamp their existing invoice validation process with

digital technologies like simplification, automation, analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI). A digital invoice validation process will ensure efficiency, high ROI, and cost-effectiveness. In short, it can help TSP's
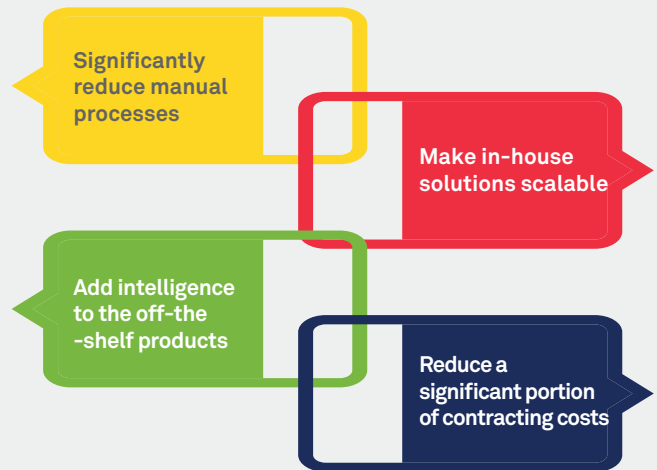


Figure 3: Key features of the solution

Digital invoice validation includes the benefits of all the existing approaches while eliminating the challenges associated with each of them. It is based on a multi-stage approach starting with process simplification. Process simplification helps telecom companies re-engineer their existing auditing processes and introduce rule-based auditing, which streamlines a significant portion of a TSP's invoice validation process and makes it suitable for automation. It helps TSP's create a detailed level process flow and simplify the verification of subscriber details like customer names, 'bill to' and 'ship to' addresses, bank details. It can also help verify financial information and all the other auditable aspect of invoices like Accounts Payable (AP) details, Purchase Order (PO) details.

Process simplification allows the creation of an active directory of prebuilt auditing parameters that can be customized to enhance existing invoice validation process. It also enables detailed auditing for proactive identification of mistakes and errors and sudden surges in call rates that result in bills shocks.

Post simplification, rule-based activities in the invoice validation process may be automated. This reduces human effort, which can be reallocated to making procedural changes and implementing design thinking that supports the organization's business transformation initiatives to stay competitive in the current digital era. Besides, this results in less possibility of manual errors, higher yield, and significant time-saving.

Digital invoice validation also uses analytics and AI to generate alerts and notifications, which help TSP's identify and proactively manage the accuracy of bill charges. This helps the auditor validate the accuracy of the bill before invoicing the customer.

Further, real-time data visualization to generate invoice validation reports helps achieve optimum performance. Reporting when complimented by analytics and AI can help auditors validate invoices accurately as it helps identify the errors and course correct them.

There is no doubt that digitizing the invoice validation process helps TSP's optimize their in-house solutions to be more scalable and replicable. In fact, it promotes efficient customer/vendor portal integration that can work seamlessly with any of the organization's existing off-the-shelf products, or those specially designed to do invoice validation.

Digitizing the invoice validation process also helps telecom companies weed out bottlenecks, speed up the process, curb errors that could have otherwise occurred, and liberate the workforce for more meaningful business development activities. Overall, it will surely make a significant contribution to an organization's bottom line.

About the author

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