

Proposal for Event Based Action User Notification *Monthly Call Limit is Exceeded*

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What is the Issue

Customers are experiencing excessive overage fees because they are uneducated about product operation or they lack time to reduce these fees. Overage fees can be generated when the number of calls made by a unit exceeds the monthly call plan. Overage fees can be a symptom of system problems, unit operation, or unit configuration. Although the overage fees are a source of revenue for Telemetric, these excessive overage fees could contribute to negative customer perception and is a sign that Telemetric customers have difficulty in reducing these fees.

Background on the Issue

Although the customer is responsible for monitoring the airtime usage of their purchased units, Telemetric provides additional support to the customer by notifying them when units exceed their call plan.

There are several sources of information that are distributed to product support that are used to analyze overages for the nationwide install base for Telemetric products. These sources of information are as follows:

- weekly e-mail that lists the devices that are near or over their call plan
- single e-mail per device for devices making 100 calls per day
- e-mail listing of all devices making 400 calls per day
- e-mail that is generated by Aeris that represents high call devices
- quarterly ranking list showing the total overage fees for all customers

These five sources are reviewed and then analyzed to respond to the customer with the appropriate corrective action to reduce the number of calls.

Telemetric notifies the customer in several ways:

- sending a custom e-mail that lists the devices, number of calls, overage fees, reason, and corrective action
- sending a technical bulletin on Overage Fee Awareness that lists the device, number of calls, overage fees, reason, and corrective action
- creating an Excel spreadsheet for outside sales that lists all devices that have reached their call limit. These spreadsheets are reserved for the large customers.

Since May of 2005, Product Support has distributed 40 custom e-mails notifying the customer about specific units going over their monthly service plan. At this time, the product users guide did not

inform the customer of the service plan and overage fee. Only through direct phone support and four customer surveys did this information become apparent.

Because of the high number of overage fee notifications and incomplete documentation, a technical bulletin was developed to speed the process and to educate the customer on the service plan and associated overage fees.

Since December 2005 when the first technical bulletin was issued, there have been 75 technical bulletins issued along with an introductory e-mail. Each technical bulletin represents up to six months of overage fees. However, both the original e-mail and technical bulletin did reduce the number of overages because the customer was notified.

Below is a sample list of customers who received notifications and a sample of their overage fees:

Table 1 – Sample List of Devices with Overage Fees

Customer	Number of Devices With Overage Fees	Sample Overage Fees
Imperial Irrigation	1 out of 4 devices	1 device \$ 218
Conectiv	15 out of 56 devices	1 device \$ 3824
Brunswick	1 out of 1 devices	1 device \$ 282
Carl Dyke	1 out of 2 devices	1 device at \$ 40 per month (average)
Orlando Utilities	2 out of 18 devices	1 device \$ 158 1 device \$ 113 Total \$ 271
Jemez Mountain Cooperative	4 out of 53 devices	1 device \$ 441 1 device \$ 60 1 device \$ 243 1 device \$ 384 Total \$ 1128
City of Fountain	1 out of 5 devices	1 device \$ 132
Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative	2 out of 4 devices	1 device \$ 664 1 device \$ 1620 Total \$ 2284

The quarterly ranking list that is distributed by accounting shows 66 customers with overage fees. Some customers have over 100 units while others have only 5. However, all units are important because they are part of the customer's system.

The customer needs to be notified when a unit is near its monthly call limit. Although there is a call limit feature built into the unit, it is apparent from the sample list that this mode of notifying the customer is presently not working.

Implemented Process Improvements to Solve the Issue!

The following process improvements have been made to notify the customer in order to reduce their overage fees:

1. Four customers were surveyed over the phone to see if they knew about the overage fee that is part of the service plan. From this information, it was apparent that the customer was not educated about the service plan and overage fee
2. A custom e-mail format was designed that listed the device id, overage calls, reason for the overages, and a corrective action. The custom e-mail was designed to have impact when the customer reads the e-mail, primarily seeing a trail on the amount they were being charged.
3. A technical bulletin was developed to speed the process for notifying the customer. This provides Telemetric and the customer with a hardcopy and educated the customer on the service plan and overage fee
4. The T646 users guide was updated, which directly describes the service plan and overage fees.

Now the customer is educated and sales and accounting have more credibility when approaching the customer

Recommendation

Although the customer has been educated on the overage fees through e-mail, technical bulletins, and manual updates, the customer must view their airtime usage by accessing their customer login site and navigating to the page where they can view the airtime usage. Viewing the airtime usage on the website is not a priority for most users even though high overage calls can be a symptom that the customer's system is malfunctioning.

Note: usability problems exists navigating to the Airtime usage page because its listed under the Advanced Programming hyperlink but is not described in the manual

In order to make it easier for a customer to see when devices are near their monthly call limit, it is recommended that an event-based action be implemented that flags the customer via e-mail when a device reaches its monthly call limit.

The following information is currently available on the website, which represents the same information that product support and accounting receives when they notify the customer about overages:

- Service Plan (e.g. 120)
- Billable Calls for the month (e.g. 401)
- Overage Calls (e.g. 281)
- Overage Bill (e.g. \$36.53)

Because the Telemetric units and the website already have a flag when a call limit is reached, the website is capable of calculating when a device reaches its monthly call limit.

The event based action will need to be implemented in the New User Notification feature of Event Based Actions. This will allow the customer to be notified via e-mail when a device reaches its monthly call limit. The customer will also be able to direct these e-mails to personnel responsible for overages along with a copy to Telemetric product support.