



University of Wisconsin-Madison

UW E-Business Consortium

"Helping Industry Gain Competitive Advantage Through E-Commerce and E-Business"

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Project Report

**Strategy for Enhancing TDS Telecom's
Online Customer Self-Service Offerings**

**Project Sponsor
TDS Telecom**

Authors

**Mitch Calvin
Matt Gohr
Brian Isenstein
Swapnil Sanghavi
Charlie Sieb**

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Executive Summary

TDS Telecom is in the business of supplying land-based phone, Internet and satellite-based television services to predominantly non-metropolitan areas of the United States. These three business segments have experienced intensified competition from cellular phone and cable TV operators in recent years. Our University of Wisconsin student group was asked to investigate the TDS Telecom website (www.tdstelecom.com) and assess its customer self-service offerings related to residential phone service. We compared the TDS website with websites of close competitors, cellular phone providers (also competitors) and other non-competitors, with an emphasis on how and what these sites do to serve customers online. The goal of assessing online offerings was to figure out how to make customers more self sufficient by serving their needs via the Internet. Serving customers more effectively over the Internet can lead to an increased competitive advantage as well as significant cost reductions through a decreased call and e-mail burden at TDS customer support centers. Our recommendations are:

- Cater to specific user needs unique to new (potential) customers and customers who may be moving their place of residence
- Enhance presentation of product/service offerings, giving customers the ability to make comparisons and educated choices
- Consider an initiative to develop a comprehensive, website spanning, customer support system designed specifically around the customer. This can be done by taking advantage of the full capabilities of the RightNow software.
- Combine accounts/billing for Internet and telephone service subscribers
- Provide for adding and canceling Internet and telephone services and options online
- Remove invitations for call to customer service for modifying account information, account questions, and all other services that can be provided online instead

We believe that taking the above recommendations into consideration will improve the customer self-service experience and lead to greater customer website usage and lessen the volume of phone calls made and e-mails that need to be handled by TDS's customer support.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 Company Background.....	6
1.2 Project Motivation	6
1.3 Project Deliverables.....	6
2. Project Methodology.....	7
2.1 Assess TDS Customer Self-service Offerings.....	7
2.2 Interviews with Other Companies.....	7
2.3 Assess the Utility of TDS Telecom Website	7
3. Quantitative Analysis.....	8
3.1 Competitors.....	8
3.1.1 Companies Selected	8
3.1.2 Results - New (Potential) Customers.....	8
3.1.3 Results – Self-service Troubleshooting.....	9
3.2 Cellular phone service providers	9
3.2.1 Companies Selected and why.....	10
3.2.2 Results – Existing Customers.....	10
3.2.3 Results – New (Potential) Customers	11
3.2.4 Results – MyAccount.....	11
3.2.5 Results - Troubleshooting.....	12
4. Self-Service Offerings - Findings and Recommendations.....	13
4.1 Persona: New (Potential) Customer	13
4.1.1 Recognition of New (Potential) Customer	13
4.1.2 Helping a Relocating Customer.....	13
4.1.3 Recommendation - New and Moving Customers.....	14
4.1.4 Product Portfolio Presentation	15
4.1.5 Product Comparisons	15
4.1.6 Product Differentiation	16
4.1.7 Recommendation – Product Portfolio Presentation.....	17
4.2 Persona: Existing Customer / MyAccount.....	19
4.2.1 Selection of Services.....	19
4.2.2 View Bill Options	19
4.2.3 Download Bill.....	20
4.2.4 Bill Tutorial/Explanation.....	20
4.2.5 Bill Payment Options.....	21
4.2.6 Auto-Pay Option	22
4.2.7 Accessing Different Accounts through Same Login.....	22
4.2.8 E-Mail Notifications.....	23
4.2.9 Call Analysis.....	23
4.2.10 Product Manual	24
4.2.11 Recommendations - Existing Users	24
4.3 Persona: Troubleshooter	25
4.3.1 Current Support System – FAQs.....	25
4.3.2 Recommendations.....	26

5. UW E-Business Consortium Company Interviews.....	29
6. Additional Findings and Recommendations.....	31
6.1 Use More Links / Less Text	31
6.2 TRUE TALK Top 7.....	31
6.3 Watch for Expirations and Odd Headers	32
6.4 Excessive Scroll / Screen Resolution.....	32
6.5 Include Easy to Find Self-Service Links	32
6.6 Avoid Use of “Disclaimer”.....	33
6.7 TRUE TALK Unlimited	33
6.8 Redundancy / Inefficient Use of Space.....	33
7. Home Page Analysis	34
7.1 TDS – www.tdstelecom.com	35
7.2 Qwest – www.quest.com	35
7.3 Iomega – www.iomega.com	36
7.4 Charter – www.charter.com	36
7.5 Dell – www.dell.com.....	37
7.6 Sprint – www.sprint.com.....	37
7.7 Verizon – www.verizonwireless.com.....	38
7.8 T-Mobile – www.t-mobile.com	38
7.9 Cingular – www.cingular.com.....	39
7.10 Nextel – www.nextel.com.....	39
Appendix A	40