

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

Brandon Cushing

iFreedom Direct Corporation

Telecommunications Manager

Last updated: 2008 Aug 11



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**Product(s): Long-Distance**  
**Industry: Finance**

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## 1. Business need

"Our primary business need was correct billing. We have a fairly small accounts payable department and they were taking between four and five hours to compile the data that was needed in order for another person to put it into an Excel spreadsheet and then get a specific total for the account codes only. So it started one month and went clear through to the next month every month."

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## 2. Evaluation & selection

"My top criteria I think would be customer service first, then a pricing basis. Most every company out there can give you a price, but not every company can give you specific service to what your needs are. I am a big fan of interviewing with as many providers as you can. During this past process, we actually brought in six different carriers. Each company was given just the criteria that we have for long-distance PRIs. Each one came in with specific pricing all very much in the same area. We came in and with each company, we interviewed with their sales representation and took each one of the different bids, if you will, and categorized them as far as impressions. What did they offer? What kind of services did they offer, not just what prices did they offer? How many people would we be working with? Would we be working with one person? Would we be working with four people? What is our point of contact? We also took a look at what is the presence that this company has here in the state of Utah or here in the Salt Lake metro area."

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## 3. Why Qwest?

"The major reasons behind picking Qwest were because of the simplicity of their billing system that fit our needs; the attentiveness of not only the sales representative, but also the account team when they came out to speak with us; and then the fact that they had a full backing of a customer service team that was here. We've been through three different long-distance carriers here in this office since I started about seven years ago, and some of them for a short period of time--for one year; one carrier was here for about six months before we changed carriers after I started. We were familiar with the fact that 'Hey, you know, everyone can give us a specific price. What can Qwest offer us that these other companies have not been able to?' In the billing, this is a direct advantage for our company that Qwest had. Most others did not have something that we could actually view, that we could actually take a look at, sort out, view an example, print it out, take a look at it--something that was actually tangible that we could sort through and find if it fit our needs."

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## 4. The implementation/installation

"Very well. We had a 45- to 60-day window in which they were to install the T1s. Now they actually told us this 45- to 60-day and we actually had them installed about 35 days from the signing of the contract. It came in very quickly. Now we did come across a small issue with two of the lines that were being installed that were coming out of a switch here in Salt Lake and we needed to revert back for a couple of days, but it was then resolved within a three-day period of time--we were back up and running and no problems ever since."

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## 5. Overview of solution

"Currently, we have four data T1s that come in, direct DIAs. We have four long-distance PRIs and we have two local PRIs to service us, and then we also have approximately 85 toll-free numbers along with about 350 direct DID numbers that come to our 801-493 prefix or to our NPA NXX."

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## 6. Customer service

"All I can say is, I have more than enough people here in Salt Lake that have taken care of me if there has been an issue. We really have not had any issues to where a lot of customer service has had to come into play, in emergency response times or anything of that sort. What we have encountered is an account rep that calls at least twice a week just to check on how things are going, to see if there's any assistance needed. We have our data service person, one of the engineers that I've worked with in the past in turning up some of the data lines that we have, that calls once every couple weeks to keep in touch. I think the biggest thing is that with the account team that I have here in Salt Lake, on a customer service basis, they take it to a next level."

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## 7. Non-financial benefits

"Going back to our billing situation, you know, the fact that it is so simple that we can complete it in 15 to 20 minutes versus the two, three, four-day, an hour here, an hour here situation--that to me saves me time on something that I shouldn't have to worry about. It relieves a lot of stress on me on a monthly basis, and also on our accounts payable person. Our billing process prior to going with Qwest with our long-distance consisted of a four-day period of time compiling data from the Web interface that our previous carrier gave to us, compiling data from the CD bill that they had from us, and also compiling data from the paper bill that they would send to us. That all came at different times of the month. With Qwest, we've been able to receive our bill over the web through a simple application that is installed on a computer here at the office. It takes me about 15 to 20 minutes to run two specific reports--that the customer service or the help desk for the specific application helped me to set up--and walked me through setting each piece up. So now it's a simplified process of clicking on two buttons. It runs two reports; it prints out specifically what I need. And the fact that my representative gives me a call just to check up on things so I don't have to initiate that conversation or initiate that contact all the time makes it very worthwhile for me. I know that he's the one that's looking out for me and not me having to always look out for my company."

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## 8. Measurable benefits

"Where we have saved money with Qwest is the fact that our bill comes out to what it states we owe. Every penny can be allocated to a specific department, every dollar can be allocated correctly to be spread out the way we need it to be done. Whereas with our previous carriers, there were specific amounts that could not be allocated and sometimes we could not figure out why, or even our account rep could not figure out why. And after spending hours of time--not only me, but the people in accounts payable and in accounting--to figure this out--it then went back to our previous carrier to research it, us to wait two weeks for them to find out why this had been charged, sometimes finding that it was incorrectly billed to us as it was another company with the same name, but not under the same corporation ID, or could be miscellaneous charges that were added because of specific taxes that were not charged before or--there were several other reasons. The measurable for us in this situation is the fact that everything is explained clearly and we don't have to spend 10-12 hours with three different people taking care of this bill. We can actually allocate it correctly in 15, 20 minutes and be done."

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## 9. Areas for improvement

"Everything that we have experienced with Qwest has been better than what we have had in the past. The turn-around service as far as installation, turn-up. The ticket process that Qwest has, has been much more efficient. I can either issue a ticket online or I can call their toll-free number for their repair service or for their customer service. I have a single point of contact with a full account team here in Salt Lake located near where I'm at that takes care of about every need that I have. I know that sounds kind of cheesy to say that I don't have any criticism for a company that we are doing business with, but I really have not had anything that I could state 'They needed to do this differently or they need to do this a little better.' Any problem that I have had in the past has been resolved with a simple phone call and somebody explaining something to me or a simple phone call and the issue being taken care of."

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## 10. Future plans

"One of the major changes that we are going to make in the next few months is going to be changing our data services from very simple four data T1s to a service that Qwest calls ELAN, an extended local area network. We were able to get bandwidths of 10, 20, 30, all the way up to 100 megabit and beyond if you're willing to pay the extra money. Currently, we survive on six megabit with those four different T1s. In moving with our data services, we plan to now bring in a line of 20 megabit and look to spend about the same amount of money. Our long-distance plans consist of possibly opening up other call center offices such as we have here in Salt Lake in other areas in the US and extending that data network to those along with the long-distance to those other offices. Now we are not sure quite yet if we will use this as a central hub for all of our in and out calling and use point-to-point PRIs or point-to-point T1s between the offices. A lot of that hasn't been nailed down as of yet, but as far as specifics for this office, we'll be moving to a great service that Qwest now offers."

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## 11. Recommendations and advice

"If I could go back in time and talk to myself, I would give myself two pieces of advice. First one would be to not just go with the first carrier that you meet and not to just think about price only, but to take into account not only the services that you have now, but also see on the broad spectrum what other services can this company offer for us? My second one would be on a customer service level. If the company that you're utilizing does not get it done, make sure and take a look at the full account team that they have backing your account rep; don't just take a look at the sales rep. Your sales rep person with most other companies comes in, they make the sale, and they're gone. If they're a great person and they're really good at what they do, that's perfect. But if your account rep that you're going to be working with later on and the service team that he has to back him does not have the services or does not have the resources that are needed to assist you with your company and your needs, make sure and look at those two things."