



Telecom Brokers:
The “LendingTree” of IT
Solutions

The Internet

has transformed the way we research, compare and consider information – this is especially true for purchasing decisions.

Instead of contacting each provider or supplier directly, we now turn to third-party sites for an objective report of the facts. These websites also provide anecdotal experiences and reviews from customers, with information on product details and pricing.

Think of websites like Orbitz and LendingTree. They're now our go-to destination in the first step of our travel planning and mortgage lending decision processes. When LendingTree came along, the process of getting a loan was revolutionized – and their tagline said it all, "When banks compete, you win." Instead of having to interact with the banks directly, customers could watch them compete among themselves for their business and pick up the best deal.

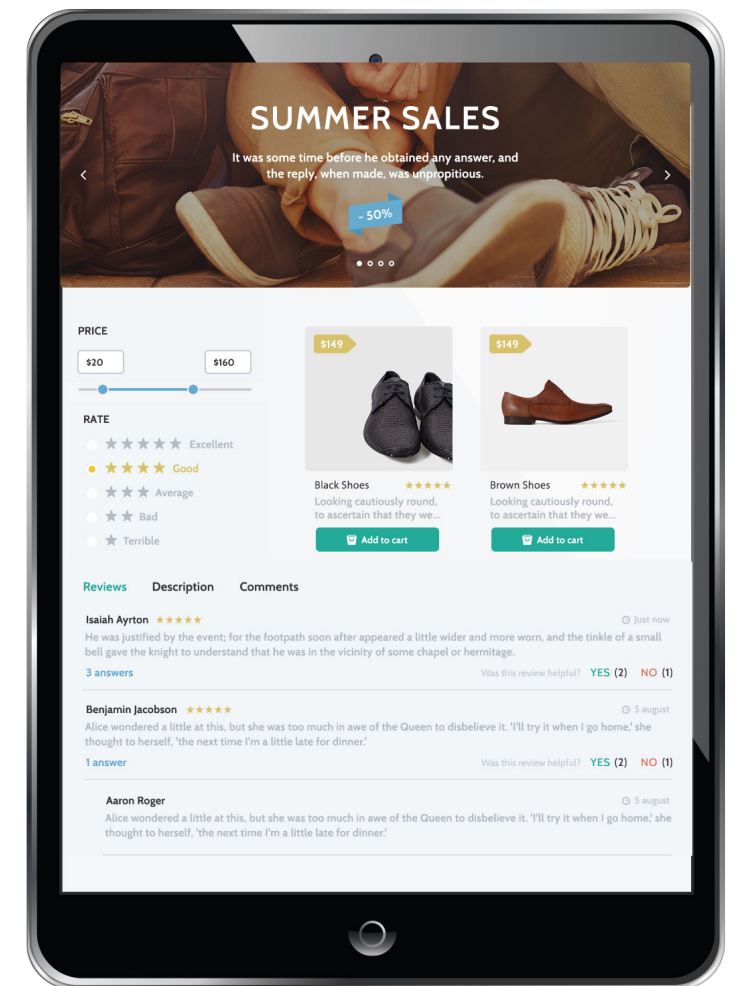
Third-Party Sites: Research Without the Homework

Comparing flights and loans is no longer a matter of dialing the telephone or interacting with a sales person directly a la 1985. It's something that can be done with a few keywords, feature preferences and clicks of the mouse.

That's why these online comparison sites are so popular – they make easy and efficient what used to take several of hours over the course of days or weeks. What are some of the specific benefits provided to visitors of aggregation sites?

- *Time savings – all the necessary info is gathered quickly*
- *"Apples-to-apples" comparisons of the options*
- *A "CliffsNotes" version of the product details*

Before the Internet was so readily available throughout the country, we had to make multiple calls and look through voluminous info to find the most important facts. Nowadays, we can just search for the information we need on Google and third-party websites. These sites even include reviews from neutral third parties who have done business with the provider to give consumers even more helpful inputs during their decision process.





So here's the question:

If telcos made 21st-century research possible by bringing us the Internet, why do businesses have to use 20th-century techniques to find the information they need on telecom companies and their offerings?

Old-School Research for Telecom Providers



Even though telecom is a ubiquitous service need for today's bandwidth-driven companies, business telecom service providers don't publish info on an aggregation website like Orbitz or LendingTree. Instead, they require customers to go through the old-school steps of combing through data, contacting companies directly, talking to sales agents, and doing their own comparisons.

Information on Internet providers can only be found through outdated means – and that hurts companies that are searching for the best providers for their business IT solutions needs.

Carriers Keep the Info to Themselves



Why isn't there a telecom LendingTree? Because bandwidth availability and pricing fluctuate too frequently, telecom providers don't provide companies with an easy opportunity to self-service pricing and information. The following key buying criteria tends to vary on a carrier to carrier basis:

- *Pricing – monthly recurring fees and non-recurring set-up charges*
- *Product descriptions / bundles*
- *Term lengths*
- *Promotions*

With carrier sales representatives focusing on the strengths of their products first and foremost, it can be hard for potential customers to cut through the noise and make an informed decision on the products that best fit their business needs.

After all, with so many options and requirements, the carrier selection process can be time consuming and cumbersome for companies.

Convenience over Efficiency: The Road Traveled Far Too Often

A lack of available information and helpful resource sites leaves businesses needing connectivity and cloud services in the passenger's seat of the sales process. Business decision-makers are left with a less-than-ideal buying process for their telecom solutions. They've historically been left with two choices:

1 Do their own research, comparisons and vetting.

OR

2 Go with the convenient choice or a well-known provider.

Sadly, the second option is too often the road that's travelled by businesses that need a high level of service and don't have the time to properly plan and research optimal solutions. And when that happens, they forgo the best option for the easiest one.

Many in the telecom space have seen the need and are actively creating a better way for companies to find more complete and neutral information. While there is not yet a LendingTree or site as simple as typing a few words on the keyboard, there is a process with end results that emulate the way modern business consumers want to make important and cost-sensitive decisions.

Though it's a manual process for the telecom agency, business clients can elect to have a third-party do the work for them. Reputable telecom agencies offer a carrier-neutral research and procurement service that gathers information according to customer requirements. Customers then receive an objective report with all the facts and findings they need to make an informed decision. This process puts them back in the driver's seat of the carrier selection process.

Third-party agencies

focus on your business needs, not a particular carrier's product lines. They make sense of the confusing product details that prevent companies from choosing the best option for their business needs.

How Third-Party Agencies Can Help

Third-party telecommunications agencies compile on-demand product comparisons and vendor recommendations based on client requirements. Much like Orbitz and LendingTree, users simply supply their specific needs and goals in an online form, and upon submission and a short turn-time, receive a list of available options.



Pricing and term information: which carrier is the most affordable, and how long are their terms?



Vendor information: do carriers provide services that match a company's needs and avoid service issues like over-subscription?



Provider-neutral recommendations: what is the best option?

It's the word "neutral" that defines these agencies. Unlike carrier sales reps, they don't have a horse in the race – they just want companies to take home the budget and performance winnings. That's why they're dedicated to helping you cut through the noise.

Much like a travel booking site or a mortgage rate aggregator, telecommunications agencies that offer helpful rate and product comparisons are compensated by the providers in order to offer this service to clients. That's right – the providers pay the agencies, not the clients.

Better Service, Same Price



In essence, end users get the information, pricing, recommendations, and network design and installation support information – all at no cost to their business. Companies have what they need to make the best decision, and it's all conveniently available.

As with LendingTree and Orbitz, “when telecom providers compete, you win.” It’s a two-way street – carriers benefit from streamlining the provider selection process, and companies ensure the solution they implement best fits their business and connectivity needs.



Expertise & Negotiating Power – At Your Service

In addition to making the purchase process easier, what other reasons or incentives do businesses have to engage a third-party agency? Agencies often have a deep knowledge of products, terms and providers that may be unknown to the user population, including special promotions or lesser-known carrier options. What's more, network planning pros can also work with the clients to assess the following needs:

- *Bigger pictures goals, such as expanded services or operational initiatives*
- *Multiple locations, remote offices, and the telecommuting workforce*
- *Specific business applications*
- *Growth plans*
- *Compliance and security issues*

Third-party telecom agencies use these factors to define comprehensive product needs and see projects through from inception to installation as a single point of contact. That can be invaluable when working with carriers, which have multiple parties involved and sometimes struggle with high turnover.



Most importantly,

agencies have much greater purchasing and negotiating power than business owners because they represent many clients in aggregate. Carriers value their relationships with these agencies because a single client's service needs aren't the only thing that's at stake at the negotiating table.



About Agility Communications

With over 20 years of experience in the telecom industry, Agility Communications specializes in helping businesses connect multiple locations and complex business applications, create synergy in their voice communications systems, and take advantage of emerging cloud technologies.

At Agility Communications, we put our carrier relationships to work and provide the information you need to make the right IT business decisions. We represent over 40 different providers and can offer you advisement and a simple point-of-contact for all your business communications needs.

Ready to get a free Telecom Service Comparison for your business locations?

Contact us today at 208-221-8573 or go to AgilityCommunications.net to request a free options guide.

A few of the carriers we work with...

