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# Number Porting Insanity

**Does it really have to be such a crazy process?**

I have been working on several projects lately, large and small, that involved porting of numbers from one carrier to another. The process is highly regulated, and there are time frames for each step of the process. It should all be very predictable and well defined.

But it's not.

The process can go smoothly ... sometimes. But more often in my experience, it's been challenging. A list of numbers to be ported is provided by the customer. The receiving carrier is responsible for coordinating with the carrier that currently has the numbers. The list of numbers to be moved should be validated (typically using a Customer Service Record (CSR) that shows the services that are billing on the account) and a date agreed upon by both carriers and the customer.

It seems simple enough. So what makes this so hard?

**Carrier records are wrong.** This should come as no surprise if you've dealt with carriers very much. We have seen records that don't show numbers we know are in use. We've seen records that have the numbers for other companies listed as belonging to our client. We've seen records where the information is fragmented and very difficult to find. All of these issues lead to the rejection of the request for porting the numbers.

**One discrepancy will block the entire order.** Any minor error results in a rejection. We have seen orders rejected because the receiving carrier submitted the customer name as "ABC Company Inc." and the current carrier has the name as "ABC Company, Inc." So the simple lack of the comma in the company name resulted in a rejection.

**Time frames start over.** Once an order is rejected, in many cases the clock is reset. If the current carrier has five business days to respond to the receiving carrier, then even if the discrepancy is fixed immediately, the time period starts over and you usually have to wait the full five days again.

**Carriers have weird rules.** For one project I was working on, the receiving carrier had a rule that only one order at a time could be placed against their SIP trunks. It took 30 days for them to get an order worked (if everything went perfectly) and during that time no other orders could be placed to move additional numbers to the SIP trunks. Once the first group of numbers was ported, another order could be placed, and it would take at least 30 days to be worked. We had 34 sites that were moving to SIP. They ended up creating some sort of work around so that our project didn't string out for 34 months, but as soon as the main work was done the "one order at a time" rule was back in place. You can't make this stuff up!

So what can you do to make this process easier?

**Recognize what you are dealing with.** It's a massive, illogical process, and you can't let it drive you crazy. Prepare your boss and set expectations that there may be challenges.

**Obtain your CSR information early in the process.**

As soon as you know you will be moving to another carrier, order a copy of your CSR(s) so you're not waiting on them later. The bigger the project, the more important it is to take this step early.

**Do a thorough comparison of the numbers you want to move with the numbers on your CSR.** Don't assume that the information in your CSR is correct. Be very detailed when comparing your list with the CSR; remember that one mistake will get your entire order rejected.

**Give yourself extra time to get things done.** Plan at least one order rejection into your time line. Give yourself time to obtain your CSR information and even to place orders to get it corrected.

**Think about partial steps.** If there is a problem with one number on an order, it may make sense to take it off of the order so that the rest of the process can continue. I received a list of toll free numbers that were on my client's account from their carrier (carrier A). This same list of numbers was submitted by carrier B for porting, but was then rejected by Carrier A (remember -- they are the ones who provided the list in the first place) because one number had a problem. We ended up taking that number off the list and re-submitting it (yes, the time frame started over) so that we could get the other 92 numbers ported.

Good luck!

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Melissa guides enterprise business clients through the complex process of finding the right communications solutions for their business, and getting the solution implemented properly.