

# Streamline Telecommunications Business Processes with Workflow Solutions

# Introduction

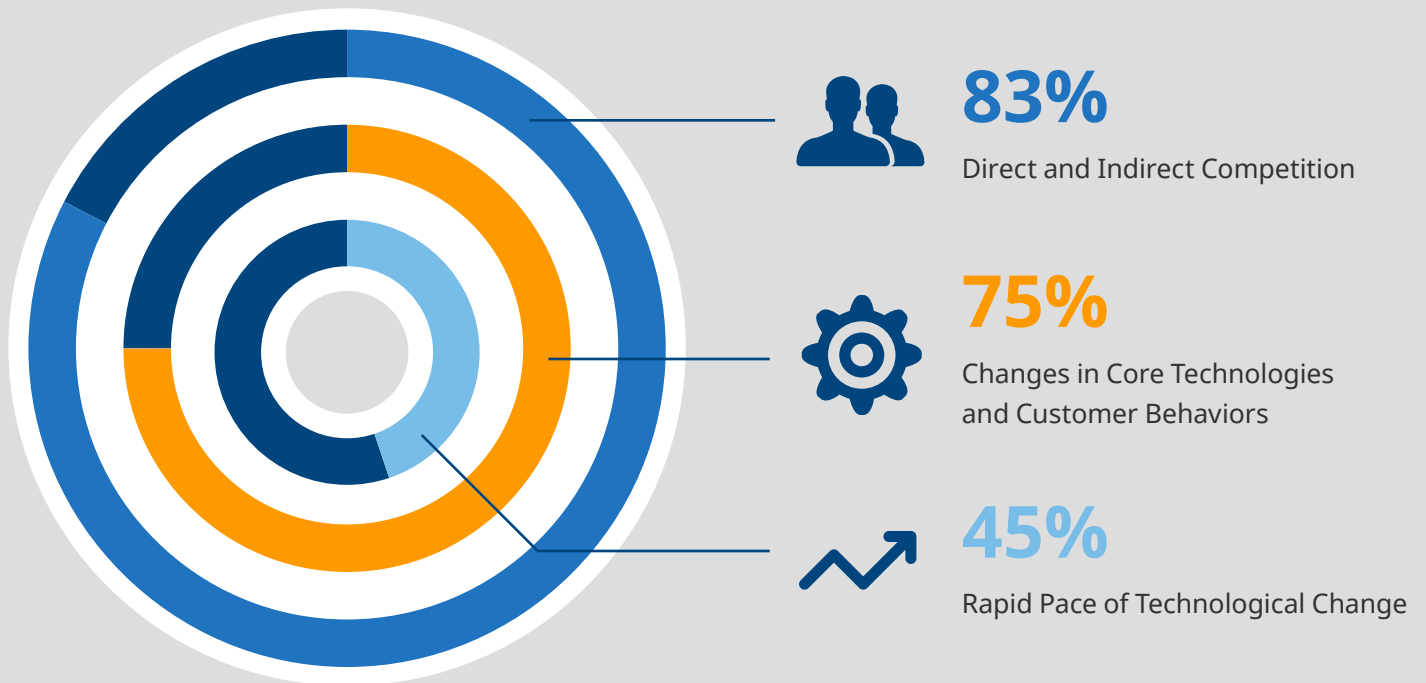
Modern Communications Service Providers face significant pressure from multiple angles: customers demand better services with greater availability, growing competition drives the need for cutting-edge technology and tight profit margins dictate that organizations run as lean as possible.

According to a 2018 PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, 83 percent of telecommunications CEOs expect both direct and indirect competitors to disrupt their marketplace over the next five years. Seventy-five percent believe ongoing developments in core technologies and customer behavior will introduce additional disruptive forces to the telecommunications sector. Moreover, 45 percent of respondents expressed concern regarding the rapid pace of technological change in this industry and their ability to meet those demands.

Addressing these many challenges requires a comprehensive overhaul of internal workflows and processes, as well as upgrades to legacy IT systems to keep pace with emerging technology and evolving industry trends. In this regard, workflow and business process automation is a critical resource, providing the flexibility and efficiency to streamline operations and support expansion.

## Challenges Facing Telecommunications Companies

Top reasons why CEO's expect market disruption:



Source: PwC's 21st CEO Survey



# Workflow Solutions: Increasing Operational Efficiency

Decision-makers may view workflow tools as relatively interchangeable, but some have far more features and options than the rest. Many of the available options are standalone applications, which can present problems integrating with other business-critical software.

However, only a select few can seamlessly integrate directly with existing billing software or are designed as part of an integrated system. This is a beneficial attribute among both workflow automation tools and billing software, enabling users to leverage many powerful applications and modules from a single, comprehensive platform.

Workflow software can be much more than a limiting application such as a task scheduler or a vendor specific automation package. At its best, it is a business process design and management system that guides organizational objectives and creates a repeatable set of instructions to make the business run more productively.

Workflow software helps businesses streamline many of their telecommunications business processes, thereby increasing operational efficiency, decreasing time to market and accelerating service delivery for all of their customers. Furthermore, end-to-end automation all but eliminates the possibility of costly

errors and mistakes. When properly configured, workflow software allows for service providers to provide both internal users and their customers with a better overall experience, improving employee productivity and increasing customer satisfaction.

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Workflow solutions provide organizations with unparalleled flexibility to configure and customize routines or one-off tasks, maximizing time and cost savings. Powerful automation abilities allow virtually any process to be mapped out and integrated with other platforms. A myriad of business processes for order management, billing, ticketing, and more can be integrated into a mapped workflow, streamlined and automated to help operate at peak productivity levels.



# Automation Challenges Threaten Operational Performance

The lack of end-to-end workflow automation is a major problem in the telecommunications industry, preventing service providers from reaching their full potential and maximizing their revenue streams. Every organization, regardless of scale or industry niche, grapples with a great deal of business processes, which can entail varying degrees of complexity.

As a PricewaterhouseCoopers study highlighted, organizations that have been involved in a merger or acquisition are especially at risk for process and workflow complexity, as their internal systems include a combination of legacy systems, proprietary software and third-party applications. Even companies that have not participated in a merger or acquisition likely oversee a similarly complicated web of disparate technologies and platforms.

The most competitive telecom companies have flourished precisely because they use all of their available resources effectively while identifying specific niches within the industry at large and filling those service gaps. A 2018 Akami study revealed that one of the top three threats to long-term success in the telecommunications space is the escalating pressure to lower service prices while maintaining healthy profit margins.

Reducing prices and increasing profits inherently requires service providers to operate as close to the bone as possible. Yet operational efficiency cannot come at the cost of scalability or market growth, companies must balance lean processes with the ability to expand when a suitable opportunity presents itself. To continue expanding their business footprint, these organizations must find ways to not only maintain their operational efficiency but scale up to meet customer demands and branch out into new markets.

In this regard, workflow and business process automation is not a luxury, but a necessity. For many service providers, building a solution internally is simply not viable, as their in-house teams lack the requisite skill set to create a high-quality, comprehensive application. Instead, they must look toward a third-party vendor to provide that software.

However, any new application or platform – even those designed to streamline internal workflows – has the potential to introduce complexity of its own. Many workflow automation tools are unable to seamlessly integrate with existing systems and software. In addition to the integration headaches such a situation presents, the application may not have the compatibility needed to automate every task and process and realize the software's full value.



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IDI Billing Solutions' Workflow module resides within the CostGuard® billing platform, fully integrating with many of the most essential processes and systems. Relying on one system for all of their workflow automation needs drastically reduces the complexity of service providers' internal processes.

Another challenge facing service providers is the issue of consistency. Too much variation in workflows not only breeds inefficiency and increases the likelihood of costly errors occurring, but it also prevents service providers from establishing a firm baseline for improvement.

Once companies have established comprehensive process consistency, they can begin to determine what processes and workflows are suitable candidates for further automation. In this way, organizations can maximize their use of automation and achieve optimal operational efficiency.

Beyond those already considerable benefits, workflow and business process automation also empowers companies to drastically reduce overhead. Employees can spend far less time doing data entry work and more time tackling value-driven tasks and responsibilities.

According to McKinsey & Company, telecommunications companies that successfully implement digital transformation technologies – specifically those related to analytics, self-service tools, IT automation and

**Automation shoulders repetitive workloads, allowing knowledge workers to focus their attention on more productive tasks.**

simplification and order management digitization – are able to achieve a 43-percent profit margin. Workflow and business process automation can help jumpstart these initiatives by providing knowledge workers with more time to pursue such innovative solutions.

Moreover, as a 2016 Deloitte report explained, automation shoulders repetitive workloads, allowing knowledge workers to focus their attention on more productive and engrossing tasks. Removing the burden of such monotonous jobs invariably results in higher employee satisfaction levels and better worker retention rates.

One of the advantages to housing all of these different features and capabilities in a single platform is that users can effortlessly navigate between them without needing to juggle multiple interfaces or even screens. Everything runs through one GUI, giving employees comprehensive visibility.

# Designing Processes with Ease

The screenshot displays a workflow for 'Order 14300 - Coat Factory - New Services and Features'. The workflow starts with a 'Manual Step' leading to a decision 'Expedite Order?'. If 'True', it goes to 'Send Order Process'. If 'False', it goes to 'NY 21?'. From 'NY 21?', if 'True', it goes to 'Processing?'. If 'False', it goes to 'Update Account Info'. From 'Processing?', if 'True', it goes to 'VM Processing', which then leads to 'Update Account Info'. If 'False', it goes to 'Update Account Info'. From 'Update Account Info', it goes to 'Control & Billing Audit Process', which then leads to 'Commissions'.

The 'Update Account Info' task is associated with the following table:

Rank	Task Name
1	<a href="#">Send Notification</a>
2	<a href="#">Billing System Update</a>
3	<a href="#">Update Billing Status</a>

CostGuard – and by extension, the Workflow module – features a user-friendly GUI that allows employees to design new automated processes built around specific business rules and track them all from one location. Users can configure data points based on each process, routing workflows accordingly and capturing data to further automate various tasks.

The system is designed to streamline job assignments as well, so tasks are not only routed quickly but also sent to the best person for the job. Workflow allows tasks to be assigned to specific employees, resources and groups. Jobs can also be assigned according to effort. Workflows can be configured to auto-route new jobs to employees who have the most space for them.

Service providers can get a tremendous amount of value out of the Workflow module without needing to develop new processes or automations themselves. The platform contains a large gallery of pre-loaded automated actions to choose from and implement. This extensive catalog of automations allows employees to

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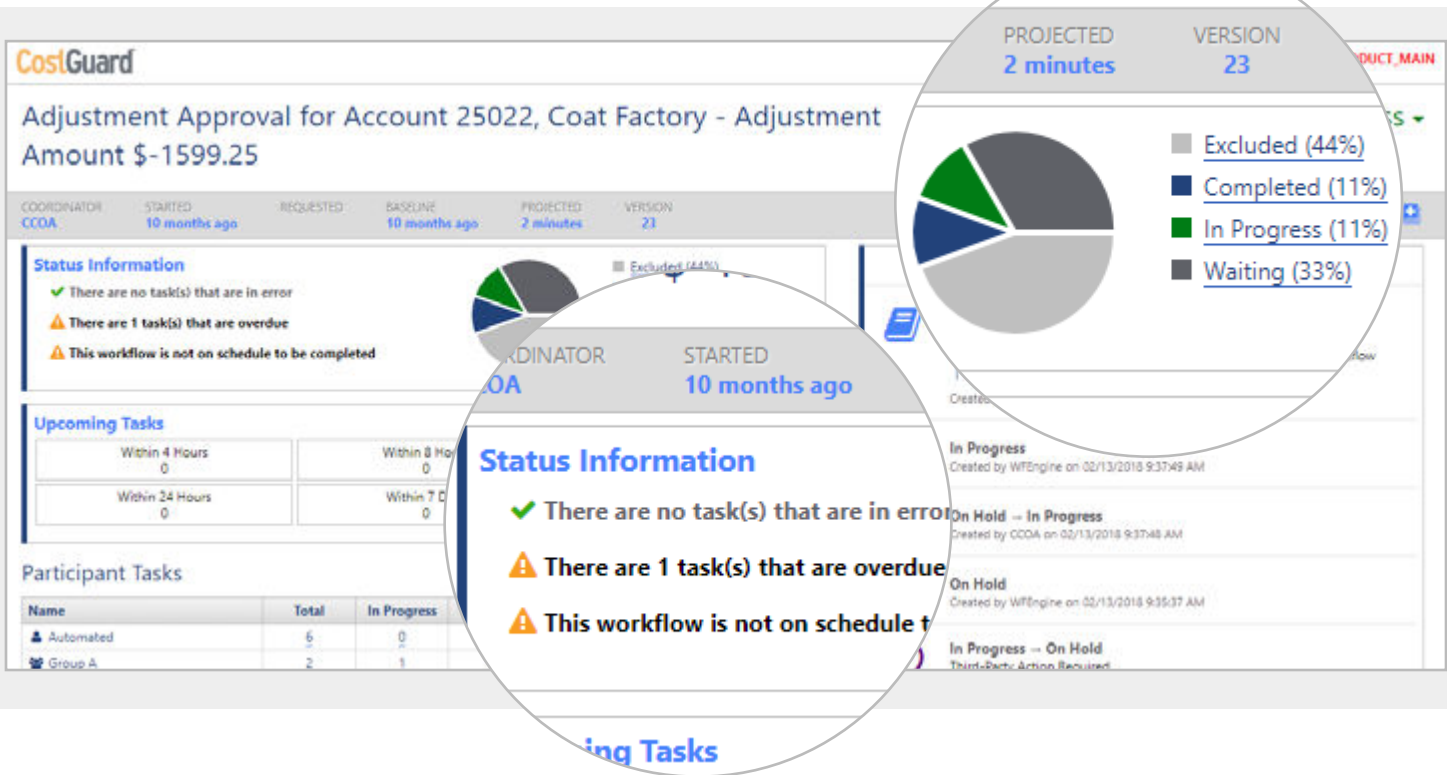
replace manual jobs and eliminate arduous and time-consuming swivel-chair tasks.

Data can be effortlessly passed from one system to another with automated actions that seamlessly configure information as needed. These automations can range from the technical, back end processes such as sending HTTP requests to third-party systems to non-technical tasks such as sending emails to customers en masse using a context-driven template.

The large scope of options available allows service providers to customize any workflow according to their specific business rules.



# Track Processes Throughout Telecom Billing Workflows



Service providers must achieve total governance across their entire workflow ecosystem to determine which processes are working properly and which have yet to be fully optimized.

CenturyLink Inc. principal architect Kevin McBride explained that service providers need to be judicious about how quickly they automate workflows and what processes they target. Ineffective and poorly designed processes will not necessarily improve after they have been automated and may continue to be disruptive forces.

Workflow's GUI allows companies to track their processes at a high level, with eyes on the overall status of all ongoing tasks. The dashboard shows processes that are in progress as well as those that are in the pipeline or contingent on the completion of current tasks.

CostGuard's interface also shows precisely which personnel and resources are assigned to a given

project. Users can view this information in real time, seeing how many resources are pulled into different projects and processes.

Workflow's dashboard drills down into sub-processes so companies achieve total, end-to-end visibility into their tasks.

One of the most important advantages to having this level of governance into processes is the ability to configure baselines and measure workflow performance against them. If processes exceed their predetermined baselines, teams can develop additional automations to further streamline those tasks and bring them in under their allotted times.

The dashboard also allows users to see how many times processes have missed, met or exceeded their performance baselines across the entire workflow ecosystem. By optimizing processes and reducing the amount of time needed to complete them, companies can bring in revenue faster than ever before.

# Setting up Triggers for More Targeted Processes

The screenshot displays the 'Step Details' configuration page in the CostGuard system. The 'Name' field is set to 'Project Kick Off' and the 'Description' field contains the text: 'This step groups all of the initial tasks needed to kick off a project and coordinate with the customer.' Below this, a 'Tasks' table lists three tasks:

Rank	Task Name
1	Conduct call with customer
1	Send Message From Template
2	Conduct internal meeting

The 'Conduct call with customer' task is highlighted in blue. To the right, the 'Manual' configuration for this task is shown, including a list of sub-tasks: '1. Review order with customer.', '2. Identify any network concerns.', and '3. Schedule installations per location.' Below this, there are fields for 'Days' (set to 5) and 'Hours' (set to 1), along with a 'Group C' dropdown and a 'Least Effort Time' field. 'SAVE' and 'CANCEL' buttons are located at the bottom right.

Workflow's Trigger feature allows companies to easily set up automation for specific events. Users can configure Triggers with detailed filters to capture only the occurrence of events that meet whatever unique criteria they have.

If an adjustment needs to be made to the billing process on an account, the service provider can set up a trigger that kicks off an email and required tracking related to that change. These Triggers cross departmental walls to keep all business units apprised of the latest updates. If a customer disconnects their service, for instance, a Trigger would notify account management that a cancellation request has occurred and respond accordingly.

As in the case with telecom processes, the Workflow module provides a large gallery of Triggers right out of the box. There is a wide variety of Triggers to choose from related to numerous events at very granular levels.



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## CostGuard Provides a Comprehensive Solution

The Workflow module is built directly into IDI's CostGuard platform, delivering service providers a comprehensive approach to managing all of their back office needs through a single interface. Companies that implement the Workflow solution can expect drastically reduced manual overhead in their internal processes, along with improved productivity, efficiency and profitability.

With Workflow and CostGuard, service providers can employ automation at different layers of their workflow environment without requiring a dedicated

and potentially siloed third-party solution or hiring a team of knowledge workers with the highly specialized skill sets needed to configure, integrate and manage such a platform.

The combination of seamless integration, effortless automation and comprehensive visibility is unique among workflow automation applications, making IDI the premier global provider of cloud based-billing, automation and workflow solutions for Communications Service Providers.

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