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TELEFONICA TRANSFORMS INVOICES INTO

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

Project baptized as e-Account was born from the initiative of the e-Invoice and, after investments of 4 million reais, will be launched as a pilot in the first semester of 2008.

Por LUIZA DALMAZO, DO COMPUTERWORLD

Juan Berrocal
director of the
residential segment
of Telefonica
São Paulo



Telefonica in Brazil has 2.1 million broadband clients. Knowing this growing base which uses the internet routinely, the operator decided to alter its phone bills from paper to an electronic model. According to Juan Berrocal, director of the residential segment of Telefonica São Paulo, everything began in April 2006 after the Electronic Invoice project which the company participated in along with 18 other companies at the invitation of the Treasury Secretary.

"We observed advantages in fiscal control in auditing, archiving and even a group of fifteen people could be relocated because it became easier to manage the data", he said. Based on this the company decided to increase these benefits to the end client and created the e-Account project, which consists of digitalizing the invoice which users receive today on paper. "The appearance is the same but the numbers of monthly expenditure are sent by e-mail or downloaded from the web, making cost control and bill storage easier" states Berrocal.

In 2007, at the beginning of this project, the team at Telefonica designed the tasks and involved several departments such as marketing, legal affairs, fiscal and information technology. "The greatest difficulties were the sizing of the average size of account files (while end users have 30KB, companies have bills of 1GB) and the definition of the type of document layout" says Bruno Moreira da Gama, Administration Superintendent of the residential segment.

2 million clients should migrate to e-Account in 2008

During the initiative the company has invested 4 million reais, mainly in infrastructure. New servers, discs, security resources and digital certification were necessary because the operator believes that by the end of 2008 between a million and a half and two million people will have migrated to the new model. "Work flows were also something new and for this reason we took three months to understand how they worked. Only now have we been able to put the ball on the penalty spot" jokes Gama.

After the latest customizations the company intends to put into practice a pilot with two hundred residential customers, which should occur in the months of April and May. According to the company the e-Account Project was implemented rapidly because Telefonica's information technology department is changing its mainframe base which has a new internally developed platform called ATIS. "This is the project which concentrates more resources, which receives more dedication from the teams and which will only be concluded by the end of the year. If it weren't for this we could have begun 2008 issuing clients with electronic invoices" states Berrocal. But the greater project could not be delayed. As Telefonica acquired several Latin American state companies nearly ten years ago it was important to unify the legacies. "This is fundamental for the company to have the appearance of a multinational", says the director.

The electronic invoicing project, however, was not put

aside. It ran in parallel because it contributed with the initiative of the company's environmental sustainability, another priority. By the end of this year, according to Berrocal, as a sixth of the invoices will be issued electronically, the expected economy of paper will be between two and three million reais in the period. "Apart from this there the gains from issuing and posting them, and a reduction in the time taken for the bill to arrive which could mean early revenue" explains the executive.

To make all this possible the company counted on Xerox, as the integrator responsible for the service, and Group1, which designed the technology which inserts the variable into each account and allows the invoice in a file format to become electronic. "Apart from being an exact copy of the paper invoice the consumer can also evaluate variables such as calls over the past three months to a city, region or country, a service which helps to keep customers faithful, he explains. The embryo about to be born promises to be a big one. Apart from already being in the expansion plans for corporate clients it will take on even greater proportions when implemented for other Latin American countries.

Project summary:

The transformation of monthly invoices into electronic documents should be:

- Simplify the analysis of the expense to the clients
- Make the monitoring of the information easy to the Treasury Secretary
- Reduce costs with printing and paper
- Gather around 2 million customers until the end of the year
- Generate an economy of paper between two and three million reais.