

Canadian Consumers and Businesses are Embracing E-Billing

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John Manley, former Minister of Industry, recently declared, "...more and more Canadians are realizing the benefits of the Internet and information and communications technologies." This is certainly the case with electronic bill presentment and payment as we continue to witness a steady acceleration of e-billing momentum from both Canadian businesses and consumers.

The key to e-billing adoption is education. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of e-billing and, as a result, are demanding the convenience and flexibility of paying bills over the Internet. Businesses are responding to this demand in order to remain competitive, shifting from traditional to Web-based billing processes.

According to a recent poll by Gallup, over 80 percent of Canadian businesses possess an awareness of e-billing and more than 25 percent are prepared to offer e-billing during the next 12 months. On the consumer side, an Angus Reid study found that over 20 percent of Canadians with Internet access are already paying their bills online and another 39 percent are planning to start using the Internet to pay bills within the next two years.

This is a relatively new development for Canadian consumers. In fact, two-thirds of those who are paying bills online began doing so in the past year. This indicates that as more people learn about the benefits of e-billing – that it is easier, faster and more convenient than paying by mail – the greater the demand will be for this innovative technology. In addition to meeting the needs of their customers, businesses that implement an e-billing solution will streamline their billing process, thereby saving time, reducing overall costs, and enhancing customer care.

Another factor that will help to advance e-billing adoption is the recently announced government initiative, the National Broadband Task Force. Through this program the Canadian government hopes to make high-speed broadband Internet services accessible to all businesses and residents in Canada by the year 2004. This will enable all communities – urban, rural, and remote alike – to experience the powerful capabilities and advantages of Internet services such as e-billing.

Producing roughly 5.5 billion repetitive bills per year, Canada is a prime market for e-billing. In fact, Canadians are already slightly ahead of Americans when it comes to financial transactions over the Internet. In a recent Forrester Research study, 25 percent of Canadians reported doing financial transactions over the Internet compared with 15 percent of Americans. By all indications, Canadian businesses and consumers are quickly realizing the savings in time, money, and resources afforded through e-billing.

Sources:

Canadian Biller Research: National telephone study conducted by the Gallup Organization in May 2000 among a random sample of 486 Canadian businesses.

Canadian Consumer Research: National Angus Reid Omnibus telephone poll conducted in March 2000 among a representative cross-section of 1,500 Canadian adults.

"Government of Canada Announces Commitment to Bringing High-speed Broadband Internet Services to all Canadian Consumers" Office of the Minister of Industry October 16, 2000.

Forrester Research Inc., as quoted in Maclean's, October 16, 2000.

