



## To Analyze Telecom Costs, Call on This Exec

By JUDY NEWMAN  
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### **Nancy Peckham, offering insights on telecommunications.**



Nancy Peckham is president of [Valicom Corp.](#), a Fitchburg company that helps businesses figure out how to cut their costs for telephone, Internet and other telecommunications services. Ever wonder if your business is [spending more than necessary](#) on the basic expenses of telephone, data and Internet services?

That's where Valicom Corp., Fitchburg, comes in.

Founded nearly 20 years ago by Nancy Peckham, Valicom analyzes clients' telecom costs and recommends ways to make them more efficient and less expensive.

A Brookfield native, Peckham earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from UW-Madison and began working in the telecommunications industry just as it was shaking up, with deregulation spurring a flurry of competition followed by a trail of mergers and acquisitions.

Peckham was in sales, and later in sales management, for long-distance phone provider Republic Telcom, based in Minneapolis. Republic was purchased by two more companies, which then were acquired by MCI.

"This was the way of the industry in the 1980s and 1990s. There were a lot of growing pains as divestiture occurred," she said.

Peckham got out after the first acquisition and started her business in the spare bedroom of her home in 1991.

Today, with husband Paul Peckham as the company's information technology director, Valicom is a thriving business. Nancy Peckham now serves as a mentor to other young entrepreneurs.

#### **What made you decide to go into business?**

**A:** I saw a huge need in the marketplace for an independent consultant, not tied to a long-distance carrier or telecom company, to tell businesses how to save money and improve their service. I heard that over and over again from clients and I decided this was an opportunity to start my own business. I was a pioneer in telecom expense management at that time.

#### **What is involved in telecom expense management? What types of services do you advise clients about?**

**A:** We look at fixed telecom and wireless services. Fixed services include local phone, long distance, Internet, data services, data networking among various locations, audio and Web conferencing. Wireless involves cellular phones, BlackBerry phones and other portable devices and pagers.

Many of our customers have their bills sent directly to us. We can help to process and pay their bills in a timely manner. Our system does automated auditing to find errors, discrepancies, overcharges and savings opportunities of all types.

Clients can access our system to look at their reports, as well as chart different ways to mix and match their expenses.

**The telecom industry has gone through major changes in the past 20 years. How have those changes affected your business?**

**A:** The Internet was virtually non-existent when I started my business and the proliferation of cellular phones and portable telecom devices such as BlackBerries has been enormous.

A lot of our clients are not educated as to what is available. One of the biggest things we do is train and educate our clients. We find out about plans that may benefit them and serve their needs.

**Has the economy hurt your business?**

**A:** No, in fact 2009 was one of our best years. Companies are looking for ways to save money. We do have a smaller staff than we had a couple of years ago. Through attrition and automation of our services, like our third-generation [Clearview](#) tool, we have been able to grow our revenues without adding staff.

**What are some of the biggest mistakes your clients have made?**

**A:** I always call it the "1,001 ways that you can reduce your telecom expenses." The industry has billing systems that create a lot of discrepancies on bills. A lot of times, negotiated discounts are not entered in the system, or a carrier says it will waive certain fees and it doesn't do that. There may be phone lines a client no longer uses, or lines ordered disconnected and the utility company never followed through.

When a company looks at its telephone bill, there may not be a breakdown of the information that goes into it. We order a list and translate the industry codes into English. Then we can go from there and ask the client if all of the telecom features provided are being used, and if they are set up in the most efficient way.

**What are some of your best accomplishments for clients?**

**A:** We saved an energy utility company in St. Louis \$1.5 million a year, mainly by seeking requests for proposals from vendors and negotiating contracts. Historically, from the time Valicom started, we have saved clients 30 percent on their average annual telecom expenses.

**What is Clearview?**

**A:** It is a form of our technology platform that can be purchased by clients as an on-demand, self-service tool for doing their own telecom analysis. Most of the companies in our industry work with very large clients. [Clearview software-as-a-service](#) is aimed at small to medium-sized companies with \$10 million to \$500 million in annual revenue.

We just launched [Clearview software-as-a-service](#) on Feb. 1 and expect it will help Valicom grow.

*About Valicom:*

*Valicom is a Madison, WI based telecom expense management organization, founded in 1991. President and CEO, Nancy Peckham, operates Valicom as a certified, 100% woman-owned business. Valicom is a vendor independent and value-oriented TEM provider offering validation of and control over telecom costs including voice, data, and wireless communications. Valicom offers a full suite of services including telecom audit, RFP, invoice process, invoice payment, test calls, contract negotiations and more. Services are delivered utilizing Clearview, our user-friendly third generation software platform. [Clearview](#) can either be used as a web-delivered subscription software-as-a-service or as part of a comprehensive business outsourcing plan. For more information, please visit [www.valicomcorp.com](http://www.valicomcorp.com).*