

The background of the slide is a solid grey color. Overlaid on this are several 3D-style arrows pointing upwards and to the right. One arrow is a vibrant orange, while the others are a light grey. They are arranged in a staggered, overlapping pattern, creating a sense of forward motion and growth.

# GSG Surges Ahead with Sakon

*New Platform, Historical Strengths Set Company  
Apart from the Crowd*

**Sakon** 

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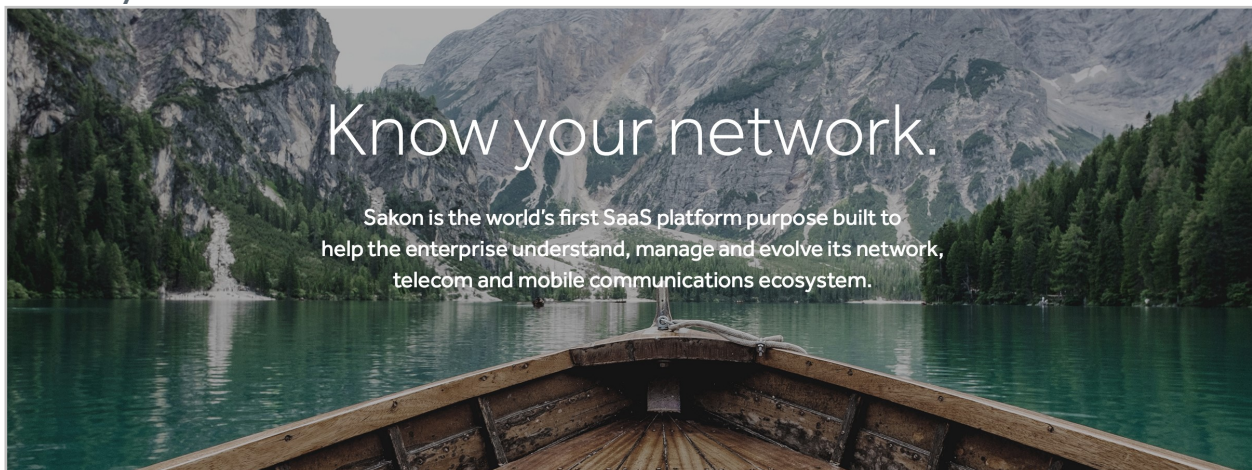
# INTRODUCTION

CIOs of Fortune 1000 companies disillusioned with traditional telecom expense management vendors, and the waves of consolidation within the TEM sector, want more. They want vendors that address the complete lifecycle of technology, mobility and telecom while also steering network transformation – not just a vendor that saves some money through the same old audit and optimization cycles.

Financial considerations remain important, of course, but they no longer constitute the only ones critical to administering the technology/mobility/telecom environment. Now more than ever, the CIO must innovate while maintaining operational excellence – and continue to adhere to budgetary and practical constraints. Cloud spending is increasing and business transformation is accelerating rapidly. All of these trends call for expert, experienced guidance.

Enter Sakon, formerly GSG.

## Visibility Matters



Source: Sakon, 2018. The Sakon platform enables organizations to know all facets of their technology, mobility and telecom assets and services.

# Who is Sakon?

Founded in 2003 as GSG, Sakon might be the biggest, most experienced network, mobility and cloud management vendor you hadn't heard of until now.

GSG started as a knowledge center and back-office outsourcer to TEM providers. Supporting these partners primarily from an inventory management perspective, GSG in 2005 built a database of normalized definitions that enabled same-to-same comparisons of vendor lingo.

AOTMP Research sees this as a key step that has helped GSG stay ahead of much of the competition. Adopting common terminology is essential to creating and maintaining clean inventory data, as AOTMP Research noted in its report, *Are Enterprises Taking Telecom/IT Inventory Service and Asset Management Seriously?*

Otherwise, continuity among common data elements within the inventory is impossible.

## Sakon Management

Andy Goorno, co-founder, CEO

Amine Doukkali, co-founder, COO

Dan Hughes, president

Sudhir Bapat, co-founder

Mohan Sathe, vice president, operations

Dan Goorno, vice president, sales

Inconsistency among similar services and service components produces “dirty” data that will not yield a complete and accurate view of the telecom environment. Because of these variations, organizations must normalize the definitions they use. Having a lifecycle management vendor handle this task takes significant burden off the enterprise, and allows the CIO and other personnel to thoroughly know the network.

Meanwhile, with solidified inventory management practices, GSG in 2008 debuted Mobile Manager for the

total wireless lifecycle. In 2010, the company launched its software-as-a-service for wireline management. Then, in 2017, GSG combined all its platforms into one – Sakon – while continuing to provide hands-on service through its professional staff. “When you pull it all together, good things happen,” said Dan Hughes, president of Sakon.

Along the way, Sakon was doing what few of its peers could accomplish – eschewing outside funding and mergers and acquisitions, keeping the focus on customers and organic innovation. The ability to do this has created a stable, predictable company that has funded its own, non-stop growth – an unusual achievement within the telecom/mobility/IT management industry. Indeed, over the years as other vendors have joined forces to bulk up their capabilities, customers have paid the price. End users have endured chaotic integrations, weakened processes and jumbled account management, and ended up with an intense unease regarding TEM consolidation.

AOTMP Research has contended that such outcomes are avoidable and, to that point, stability, an attribute not commonly found in the communications lifecycle management space, constitutes a major strength for Sakon. Most of its senior leaders have been with the company since its inception, and a good portion of its telecom specialists have more than 10 years' tenure. "Managing both software and services requires strong, continuous leadership," said Andy Goorno, co-founder and CEO of Sakon. The company employs a total of 400 people worldwide.

Thanks to its unique approach, built on the stability of its team, platform and service center, and its unrivaled inventory capabilities, Sakon boasts more than 200 customers and manages more than \$5 billion in communications spend in 75 countries. To that point, only a few companies can bring a strong global perspective to the table – Sakon is one of them.

And yet, Sakon wants to accomplish more.

Over the years, Sakon primarily has supported large systems integrator clients with communications lifecycle management software and implementation services – and it will continue to do so. Now, in addition, Sakon is bringing its technology, skill and knowledge directly to the enterprise.

## Who Sakon Serves

Again, Sakon can, and does, serve all company sizes, throughout the world, not just with software but also with subject matter experts. While the private equity owners of other TEM and lifecycle management firms push software for its scalability, they overlook the crucial aspect of expertise and managed services in making sure customers get the most benefit from their systems. Sakon combines the best of both worlds. The people it employs know what they're doing – more than 300 of Sakon's staff hold qualifications including MBA, CPA and telecommunications engineer. Thanks to those credentials and that collective experience, Sakon is able to cater to all kinds of clients, as the examples on the next page show.

## State Government of the United States

**Size:** Mid

**Annual fixed and mobile telecom spend:** \$10.5 million

**Sakon service offered:** Migration from legacy networks to VoIP, ongoing support through the Sakon platform and dedicated SMEs

**What's supported:** 112 internal agencies statewide

**Notable achievement:** Voice-communications costs down more than 50%

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## Top MMS Provider

**Size:** Large

**Annual fixed and mobile telecom spend:** \$45 million

**Sakon service offered:** Automated order fulfillment and ongoing environment audits through the Sakon platform

**What's supported:** More than 100,000 lines under management

**Notable achievement:** The partnership with Sakon has saved the MMS provider's customers more than \$9 million

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## Global IT Firm

**Size:** Large

**Annual fixed and mobile telecom spend:** \$1.2 billion

**Sakon service offered:** Sakon platform and dedicated SMEs

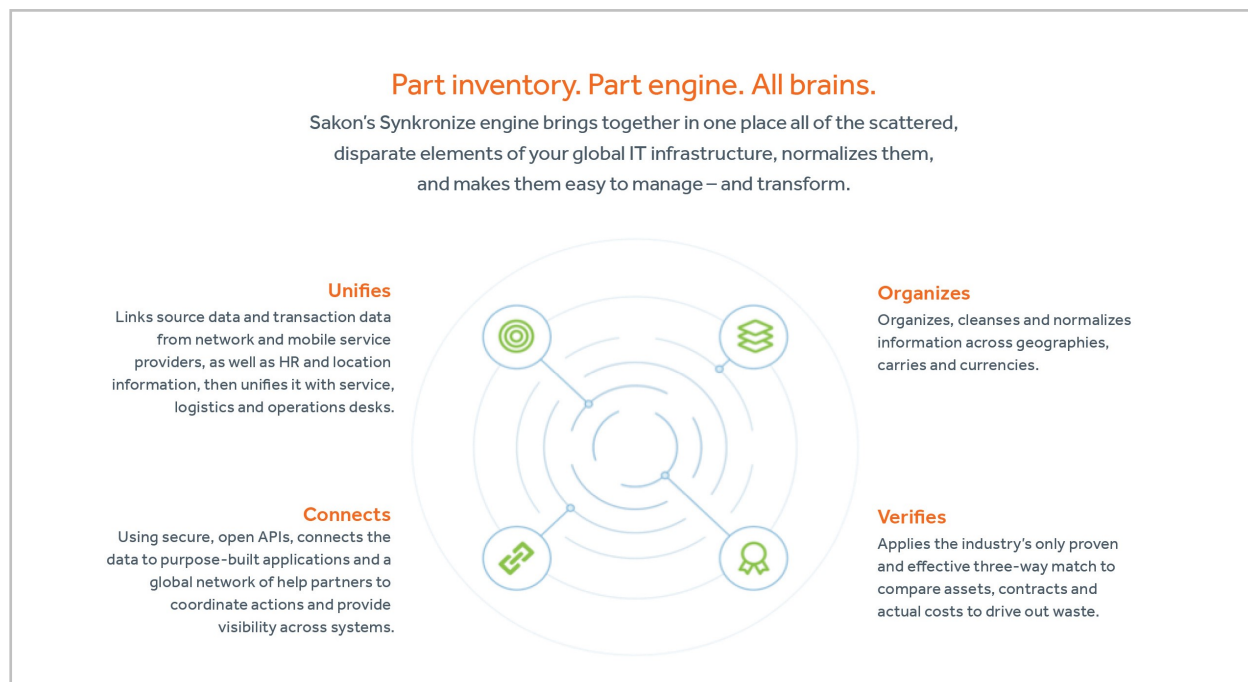
**What's supported:** More than 200,000 line items

**Notable achievement:** More than \$80 million in savings from 2011-2017 with another \$15 million projected

# Exploring Sakon's Technology

Once again, unlike many of its competitors, Sakon features an all-in-one platform for managing technology, mobility and telecom. Sakon's Synkronize™ engine pulls data from disparate systems and locations and brings it all together seamlessly. Synkronize uses APIs to extract information from other systems such as MMS and ITSM platforms.

## No More Silos



Source: Sakon, 2018. Sakon's Synkronize data engine brings together information from multiple platforms, eliminating silos and providing complete insight.

This is critical. It's no secret that inventory management issues continue to plague enterprise telecom environments. In fact, inventory stands out as a top cause for poorly performing practices, as AOTMP Research discussed in the *2017 State of the Telecom Management Industry* report. The enterprise struggle with telecom inventory will continue until processes and systems are integrated, and automation that eliminates human intervention and the chances for error is improved. Notably, Sakon is achieving these aims.

Together, Sakon's proficiencies return the communication flow to the enterprise, and keep aspects including inventory and moves, adds, changes and disconnects accurate in real-time. Organizations also can segment Sakon by application so only certain groups and people may access data as dictated by policy.



# Sakon Applications and What They Do

The Sakon platform contains all the capabilities a telecom/IT/mobility management team has come to expect as well as others that are more forward-thinking than many on the market. Here is the list:

## *Mobility & IoT*

This module provides a view of all mobile devices and services across carriers and geographies, and enables complete lifecycle management services. This translates into real-time inventory of the mobile estate; self-service tools for employee shopping as roles and permissions allow; an automated help desk; and the ability to reduce mobility services costs by 20 percent. The mobility module embeds with payroll systems and has secure, PCI-compliant credit card processing. Sakon integrates with AirWatch, MobileIron, MaaS360, SAP's Afaria and, soon, Microsoft Intune.

This module also contains ITSM capabilities, which work primarily with ServiceNow but also with FactoryFLOW. Interestingly, Sakon built its full catalog to embed within ServiceNow for both fixed and mobile. AOTMP Research analysts consider this approach ideal, as noted in the report, *The Role of TEM/EMM Vendors in Managing Evolving Technology in the Enterprise Service Catalog*. Bringing together the traditionally disparate components of the service catalog and TEM/EMM – platforms and vendors alike – makes sense. Assimilation achieves the following important outcomes:

- Reduces task-centric burden on IT management
- Helps telecom/IT experts expand the assets and services offered in the service catalog
- Promotes the continued melding and cooperation of the telecom and IT teams
- Allows vendors to guide clients as technology evolves
- Eliminates rogue employee spending

The discussion remains nascent and yet, AOTMP Research analysts are certain the amalgamation of the service catalog with TEM/EMM is necessary and useful, and that the trend is in motion. The Sakon platform puts the company ahead of the pack on this important front.

## *Network Services*

This module presents a global view of the network estate, in one place, and offers lifecycle management tools for managing and optimizing the network. It also facilitates network transformation, another new capability that sets Sakon apart from the crowd.

Network Transformation enables and tracks the move from legacy networks to new ones such as UC, SDN and SD-WAN. Dashboards and reports allow for side-by-side comparisons; managers can map proposed network changes against existing networks, convert network transformation plans to vendor orders, and monitor orders to update inventory. The application projects savings and proves return on investment with actual, updated costs from monthly invoices.



## Cloud

This newest addition to the Sakon platform is “a real game-changer,” Hughes said. In essence, Sakon Cloud applies familiar mobility practices to cloud management. “It’s really a one-to-one match,” said Hughes. Sakon is able to do this because of its strength in the inventory management domain. The TEM industry is quickly expanding outside of traditional fixed and mobile telecom management and into other areas of IT. Moving past fixed and mobile management requires a successful grasp on the basics, of which inventory comprises the most crucial. Therefore, thanks to that competence, Sakon handles cloud as well as it does other domains.

To that point, this new module gives an enterprise-wide view of employees’ cloud applications across service providers, geographies, organizations and roles. From there, IT managers may provision, support and optimize SaaS subscriptions and spend. End users also may log in to see their cloud services and make requests. The list of cloud services managed through Sakon is growing and so far works with Microsoft Office 365, Google GSuite, Salesforce, Slack, Cisco WebEx and more.

## Sourcing Management

This module oversees an organization’s contracts, including their expiration dates. The automated application extracts data from sources including Excel, Qlik and Tableau. It shows location, bandwidth and more with one click and lets procurement teams pull information and send bids to vendors. “It’s empowering procurement to help negotiate,” Hughes said.

## Expense Management

This module automates invoice acquisition, validation and payment while driving cost savings with Sakon’s proprietary three-way match methodology. Every month or billing cycle, Three-Way Match validates information in the system against every line item on bills and in contracts, prior to payment. Those payments are automated. The combination results in what Sakon calls “modernized” chargeback and recovery of telecom expenses. All told, the approach keeps inventory fresh and “builds and maintains the best system of record for our clients,” Hughes said.

### Sakon Stats

200-plus clients  
8 verticals  
75 countries  
400 employees  
\$5 billion in spend under management

## Insights & Intelligence

This app integrates with third-party analytics and displays all data in the Sakon platform. It reveals trends and anomalies, allowing telecom/IT/mobility managers to create a path to a more efficient infrastructure. Tools include interactive dashboards, widgets and reports for turning siloed information into actionable data.

## Other Unique Offerings

**In-House Bill Pay.** A number of TEM and EMM providers pay their customers' bills. However, Sakon tackles the process in a different way than most of its peers by conducting all activities in-house. Most of its competitors farm out the services to third parties, which can lead to errors and oversights. Instead, Sakon provides what it calls its Secure Closed-Loop Bill Payment. This features one dedicated account per customer rather than multiple accounts the client must track. Most importantly, processing the bill in-house means the client's account information never leaves the Sakon premises. The customer does not have to provide user names and passwords to a third party. "That's very different from our competitors," Hughes said. Once the bill is verified and paid, Sakon updates the client's accounts-payable system and the customer can view the activity.

**Complex Contract Audit Service.** When an enterprise needs a deep audit, this is the service. Here, Sakon performs a complete historical audit of telecom spend against established contracts. This reveals any compliance issues, early-termination waivers, wrongly billed moves, adds, changes and disconnects, and more.

**Physical Site Audit.** When an enterprise needs to validate which services and/or assets live at any of its location around the world, this service comes into play. The Sakon platform and Sakon SMEs work together to pinpoint assets including equipment, circuits and interface cards that are being billed but that do not show via any records. As one example, Sakon saved a customer more than \$4 million across eight locations through Physical Site Audit.

**Support Services.** Customers may choose standard or customized support that includes, but is not limited to, around-the-clock help desk support; unlimited education access; post-implementation onboarding support; monthly on-site customer success meetings; quarterly on-site business reviews; and more.

“

We remove the burden  
from the customer.

**Sakon's John Venditti**

# The Implementation Differentiation

Sakon hopes to reset and elevate the industry standard for implementation with its thoughtful approach. Scott Lawrence, vice president and senior research analyst at AOTMP, predicts that will happen, calling Sakon's method one that "saves lots of time and effort and, quite frankly, reduces errors down the road."

This represents yet one more reason why Sakon stands apart from its peers, many of whom continue to struggle with implementation. They trip up on planning that defines the exact parameters of a project, ensuring all elements, objectives, prerequisites, dependencies and issue-tracking and resolution for execution and control are in place. Sakon, on the other hand, has created a system that addresses every aspect of an implementation. Not only does this keep anything from falling through the cracks, it also means quicker implementations – all while maintaining and ensuring inventory accuracy.

John Venditti, vice president of implementations at Sakon, agrees. "Quality and satisfaction are the No. 1 goals," he said.

Not only does that make clients happy because they are up and running in a short amount of time, but they also did not find themselves "stuck in a never-ending project that drains resources," Venditti said.

"For a large, \$200 million annual spend customer with two different systems, we converted and went live in six months," he added.

Sakon achieves this level of success through workshoping. "We've taken traditional project management methodology and wrapped it in with agile development methodology," Venditti said.

In other words, Sakon breaks implementations into increments, or multi-phased timelines with workstreams that can, and do, run at the same time. This allows pieces of the project to come to life in stages, gives the customer visibility into the project and provides assurance of progress. When the client receives continual updates and sees changes taking place, "buy-in and momentum keep going," Venditti said. "People get excited."

Sakon keeps customer responsibility during an implementation to minimal levels. Before the process begins, Sakon collects LOAs, account lists, accounts-payable rules, mobility procurement policies and so on, to start systems configuration as soon as possible. Sakon schedules as much as possible in advance, too. "Within three weeks from kickoff we know which workshops we have to do," said Venditti.

Visibility remains paramount through the implementation process. Every two weeks, Venditti meets with the executive sponsor of the Sakon deal and presents project scorecards with milestones and risk mitigation. “Everyone has full visibility and accountability,” Venditti said. “We may be their fifth or sixth TEM and they comment on this.”

Sakon also does all the following:

- Walks customers through the system
- Shows how business decisions will impact day-to-day processing
- Performs interactive demos that map how work is done in the current state and what the future state needs to look like
- Maintains a customer-specific document that catalogues all aspects of the implementation, including everything that happened and who was involved

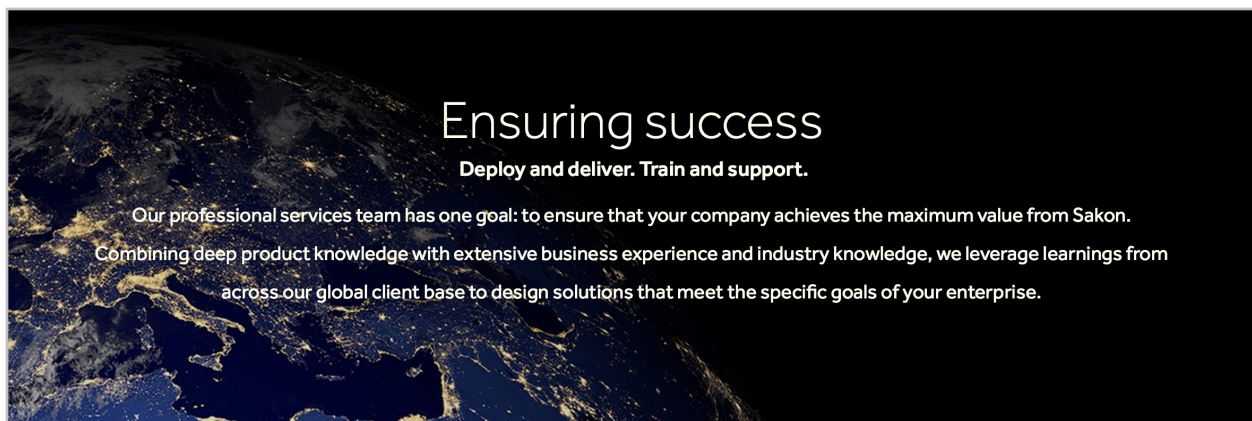
“We remove the burden from the customer so things keep moving,” Venditti said.

That way, when it comes time to go live, the customer already has been involved and become familiar with Sakon. “There are no surprises,” said Venditti. “It’s like water flowing downhill – there’s very little rework.”

Part of that is because Sakon stays involved through and after the transition period. With many other TEM and lifecycle management companies, implementation experts do hard hands-offs and leave the customer to fend for itself. Again, Sakon is different. “The project team usually sticks around for two billing cycles,” Venditti said.

All in all, Sakon aims to create a model that other TEM/EMM and lifecycle management vendors will want to emulate. “I’m hoping this becomes the standard for the industry,” Venditti said.

### “No Surprises”



Source: Sakon, 2018. Sakon pairs its proprietary technology with agile implementation processes to help clients achieve new and better technology, mobility and IT management outcomes.

# What Sakon Plans Next for Enterprises

With the new year ramping up, Sakon is looking ahead to strategies that will benefit customers. The company's two main initiatives surround the addition of cloud SaaS applications and the continued enablement of network transformation. "We've built out pretty extensive functionality in both areas," Goorno said.

In fact, cloud SaaS holds many similarities to mobility, which is why Sakon aims to promote employee-enablement rather than management. "We think that's going to have a lot of legs over the next few years," said Goorno.

In other words, assigning permissions by role and allowing the employee to order cloud services accordingly makes the most sense. The telecom/IT/mobility management department then can monitor the licenses assigned to a user, rather than manually assigning services and platforms – just as with mobility.

To that point, Sakon is embracing the whole as-a-service model, not just with cloud and mobility, but with the network. Details weren't ready at the time of publication but in terms of ordering and managing these assets in Sakon, look for more to come.

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Managing both software  
and services requires  
strong, continuous  
leadership.

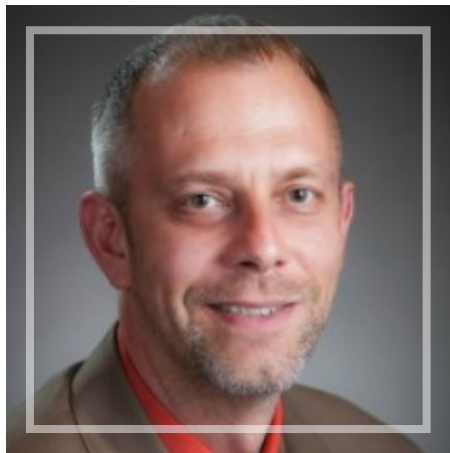
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**Sakon's Andy Goorno**

## Conclusion

With the launch of the Sakon platform, Sakon is getting its name out at an opportune time. As the telecom management industry expands by becoming more inclusive of IT and mobility, and as the expense management portion of the sector contracts through consolidation, enterprises are looking for stability and powerful, ever-evolving capabilities. By offering just one platform that streamlines an organization's siloed systems into one place, and focusing on provisioning a strong SME network, Sakon stands out from many of its competitors. And it should continue to do so.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Scott Lawrence leads the business analytics team as part of AOTMP's Efficiency First® Engine and helps organizations understand trends and performance in their fixed and mobile telecom environments relative to industry peers. He also serves as subject matter expert, and consultant for both enterprises and vendors in the industry.



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Kelly Teal is a longtime editor and journalist who has covered telecom since 2003, minus a brief divergence into health care. She also has served as a reporter for The Associated Press and an NPR affiliate.

# ABOUT SAKON



Sakon is a telecom and network technology leader that has helped global enterprises organize, understand and intelligently manage their communications ecosystems since 2003. With headquarters in Concord, Mass., and a Global Delivery Center in Pune, India, the Sakon team numbers more than 400 employees worldwide. Sakon serves more than 200 enterprise customers, and its technology is used by the world's top system integrators and outsourced services providers. See more at [www.sakon.com](http://www.sakon.com).



# ABOUT AOTMP

TELECOM MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES AND INDUSTRY STANDARDS

## ABOUT AOTMP RESEARCH AND BLUE HILL RESEARCH

AOTMP research is supported through data collected from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, general research surveys, conference and event polling and AOTMP client engagements. AOTMP's data point contributors include more than 100,000 IT, telecom and business professionals, supporting domestic and international enterprises and industry vendors. Data points contributing to research are carefully analyzed using advanced statistical methods. Research findings are confirmed through test/retest validity methodology and, therefore, paint an accurate picture of the industry. The clarity and detail of AOTMP research is unmatched in the practice of telecom environment management, and AOTMP expertise translates analysis into actionable findings representative of the industry and all related industry segments. Blue Hill Research brings unparalleled expertise and insight to AOTMP Research; together the Blue Hill and AOTMP Research set the standard for technology, mobility and telecom analysis that helps enterprises and vendors gain competitive advantage, market share and more.

## ABOUT AOTMP

AOTMP is a global information, research and advisory firm for telecom management best practices and industry standards for organizations and the vendors who support them. Using information and data points from thousands of telecom environments worldwide, AOTMP solutions help enterprises drive performance, efficiency and productivity while significantly reducing costs; and help telecom vendors provide a new level of value to their customers. AOTMP's patented Efficiency First® Framework brings balance to the telecom management ecosystem, resulting in vendors positively impacting the telecom environment and the telecom environment being better leveraged to drive business results.

Adoption of the Efficiency First® Framework through AOTMP solutions allows organizations to evolve their telecom environment to a new level of performance far beyond existing auditing, telecom expense management or mobility management programs. Sustainable short-term impact and long-term results are created that transform the environment, once viewed as an operating expense, to a strategic asset leveraged to drive business results. Solutions include training and certification programs, telecom management information portal, research and advisory, performance scoring and analytics, events and conferences, and other service solutions.

Business and performance results are measured and monitored far beyond cost savings and compared with best-in-class environments. The Efficiency First® Performance Index, which is the new standard for measuring telecom environment performance, establishes ratings for team, business and vendor performance as well as efficiency ratings and key performance indicators (KPIs). Gaps are continually analyzed as the environment, the professionals within the environment and their vendors drive towards certification status. Certifications indicate quality, efficiency, performance and value to stakeholders, customers and the individuals who support the environment.

AOTMP's clients represent \$24+ billion in annual telecom spend and include 100+ of the Fortune 500, small and medium businesses, public sector organizations and industry suppliers. For more information, visit [aotmp.com](http://aotmp.com).

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