



Crown Castle is America's largest provider of shared communications infrastructure, with more than 40,000 cell towers, 50,000+ small cell nodes, and over 60,000 route miles of fiber supporting telecommunications needs across every major U.S. market. The company's nationwide portfolio of communications infrastructure provides cities and communities connectivity to data, technology and wireless service. They work with wireless carriers, businesses, technology companies, governments, and communities to meet the growing demand for data.

Challenges

Crown Castle had acquired five fiber businesses in the past decade. The manual spreadsheet-based process was cumbersome and they did not have a system to manage billing and revenue recognition that was efficient. The complexity of the B2B contracts, their volume, and the pricing strategies—such as free subscription months or pricing uplifts—resulted in significant manual workarounds. With all the growth it was too difficult to manage all of the different lengths of contracts, the recurring revenue invoices, amendments such as early termination fees, interest rates, and have an audit trail. This created strain on their back-office operations; particularly their legacy billing software. Simulating new subscription models with complex pricing and billing rules became impossible with the legacy billing system and Excel®. Their ability to meet customer demand and competitive pressures was limited, as was the adoption of new subscription models.

In November 2017, Crown Castle acquired privately held Boston-based Lighttower Fiber Networks for approximately \$7.1 billion. The goal of the acquisition was to expand Crown's fiber footprint in urban areas of the U.S. northeast. Small-cell towers are increasingly in demand by wireless carriers as they try to boost coverage and increase capacity, especially in urban areas.

The Lighttower finance team, prior to the Crown Castle acquisition, knew that in order to stay competitive they needed to bring all of the back-office billing systems onto one platform. They have multiple systems they rely on for billing, including Oracle ERP Cloud, CRM Dynamics, and Avalara that must integrate with a new solution.



Industry
Telecommunications



Company Type
Public, S&P 500 company listed on the NYSE with an enterprise value of \$61 billion



LOCATION
Houston, TX, 100 plus offices nationwide



EMPLOYEES
5000+

\$1.2B

Processing 60,000 billing lines in revenue

Realtime

Bill customers for new service contracts

Enable

The team to process billing in a more timely fashion



Solution

Prior to the acquisition, Lighttower had embarked on a project to update their back-office technology to a more modern, flexible, and scalable billing solution. They selected RecVue, a high-performance, recurring billing and revenue management platform, to automate their Order-to-Invoicing process. By supporting flexible one-time, subscription or consumption-based billing scenarios, RecVue makes the complexity of telecommunication contracts simple.

RecVue's CRM integration allows their sales team to create contracts in their CRM and automatically interface them into RecVue in real-time. The billing team can preview the new contract information and ensure accuracy prior to billing the customer. Native integration to Oracle ERP Cloud (formerly Oracle Fusion) automates back-end operations for invoicing and revenue recognition, effectively eliminating the time-consuming, manual workarounds. The RecVue Insights Engine allows the company to forecast revenue backlog and track key performance metrics critical to their subscription business success.

Lighttower was a RecVue customer for recurring billing and revenue recognition for the fiber business. Since they were acquired by Crown Castle, the Lighttower team recommended to the parent company to leverage RecVue to handle all of this billing transformation for the fiber line of business across the entire organization.

Benefits

By leveraging RecVue, they require no additional headcount to manage an increase of 25% in revenue, enabling them to continue to operate a lean finance organization. They now process 60,000 billing lines for \$1.2B in revenue.

With RecVue, the company is able to drive operational efficiency, while having the flexibility and scalability to keep pace with their high growth rate and market demands. By eliminating manual processes and workarounds, they have experienced an improved time-to-close, reduction in human errors, and prevention of revenue leakage due to billing inaccuracies. Furthermore, they are able to go-to-market with new subscription and consumption-based business models, thereby keeping their competitive edge.

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“RecVue was able to simply and efficiently address the challenges we were having with our complex subscription pricing and recurring billing rules. No other platform on the market has the flexibility and scalability to manage the growth in our recurring revenue business. It's been a true partnership.”

– **Manager of Financial Systems and Information**, Fiber