2009-12-13

A working report on Billpay services of Grameenphone Limited

Islam, Mohammad Zahidul

Independent University, Bangladesh

Letter of Transmittal

December 13, 2009

Mr.Chowdhury Rajkin Mohsin
Lecturer, Finance
School of Business
Independent University, Bangladesh

Subject: Submission of Internship Working Report

Dear Sir

I hereby with due respect would like to state that I have completed my Internship Program in Grameenphone Limited .The topic of my Internship report is **"A working report on Billpay services of Grameenphone Limited."**Apart from the academic knowledge gained, this internship program and preparation of report has given me the opportunity to acquaint myself with a reputed telecommunication organization. I believe that the experience I acquired from this study will be an invaluable asset in my life.

It has also to be mentioned that without your expert advice and cooperation it would not have been possible to complete this report. If you have any further enquiry concerning any additional information I would be very pleased to clarify that.

Sincerely yours,

____

Mohammad Zahidul Islam
ID#0520119

Acknowledgement

The accomplishment of this report depends on the involvement of a number of people, particularly individuals who gave me their thoughtful supervision and suggestions to progress the report. I am most grateful to Grameenphone Limited management to give me the prospect to complete my internship in their respected organization.

I would like to give my thankfulness to my academic Supervisor Mr. Chowdhury Rajkin Mohsin Lecturer, School of Business, Independent University, Bangladesh for his supervision, continuous and productive suggestions. His intuitive discussions enabled me to determinate on a number of issues related to my task.

I also like to express my gratitude to my Grameenphone supervisor Nahid Sultana, Deputy Manager, Financial Services who introduce me with his interesting phases of BillPay service to look upon and has given his valuable time, supervision, competent direction and spontaneous support in every step of my internship program.

I like to convey my earnest thanks to Mr. H. M. Kabir Haider, Officer, Financial Services for his attentive suggestion and direction for successful accomplishment of my task. .

Table of Contents

On November 28, 1996 Grameenphone was offered a cellular license in Bangladesh by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Grameenphone launched its service on the Independence Day (March 26, 1997) of Bangladesh. After almost 12 years of operation, Grameenphone has near about 20 million subscribers. On September 20, 2007 Grameenphone announces 15 million subscribers.

Grameenphone is now the leading telecommunications service provider in the country with more than 16 million subscribers as of December 2008. Presently, there are about 35 million telephone users in the country, of which, a little over one million are fixed-phone users and the rest mobile phone subscribers. Starting its operations on March 26, 1997, the Independence Day of Bangladesh, Grameenphone has come a long way. It is a joint venture enterprise between Telenor (62%), the largest telecommunications service provider in Norway with mobile phone operations in 12 other countries, and Grameen Telecom Corporation (38%), a non-profit sister concern of the internationally acclaimed micro-credit pioneer Grameen Bank.

Over the years, Grameenphone has always been a pioneer in introducing new products and services in the local market. GP was the first company to introduce GSM technology in Bangladesh when it launched its services in March 1997. The technological know-how and managerial expertise of Telenor has been instrumental in setting up such an international standard mobile phone operation in Bangladesh. Being one of the pioneers in developing the GSM service in Europe, Telenor has also helped to transfer this knowledge to the local employees over the years. Grameenphone nearly doubled its subscriber base during the initial years while the growth was much faster during the later years. It ended the inaugural year with 18,000 customers, 30,000 by the end of 1998, 60,000 in 1999, 193,000 in 2000, 471,000 in 2001, 775,000 in 2002, 1.16 million in 2003, 2.4 million in 2004, 5.5 million in 2005, 11.3 million in 2006, and it ended 2007 with 16.5 million customers.

2.0 Telecom Industry in Bangladesh

Let's take a snapshot on the telecom industry of Bangladesh from its birth till now. Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) contributed almost $650 million by the cell phone industries and created nearly 250,000 jobs in the country. A Govt. study indicates that nearly 1 million people are employed directly and indirectly in the mobile industry. Till date the industry as invested a cumulative USD 4 billion (or BDT 30,000 crore) in the country and 10% of the government revenue has been generated from this industry. But now the companies are fighting for survival. Nobody made any profit in 2008 except Grameenphone. They don't know whenever they will able to make profit. Banglalink invested BDT 4700 crore in 2008 but failed to make profit. AKTEL invested BDT 1400 crore and there was no profit. Warid's trouble is much deeper.

In 2008 24,000 people were directly employed in mobile phone sector and the number of indirect employment stood at 952,000. From 1997 to June 2008 BDT 22,956 crore has been invested in telecom sector

Telecom Sector's contribution to GDP is 1.46% and most of it came from the mobile phone sector. Moreover their contribution to government's revenue is 10% which is increasing every year.

3.0 Organizational Chart

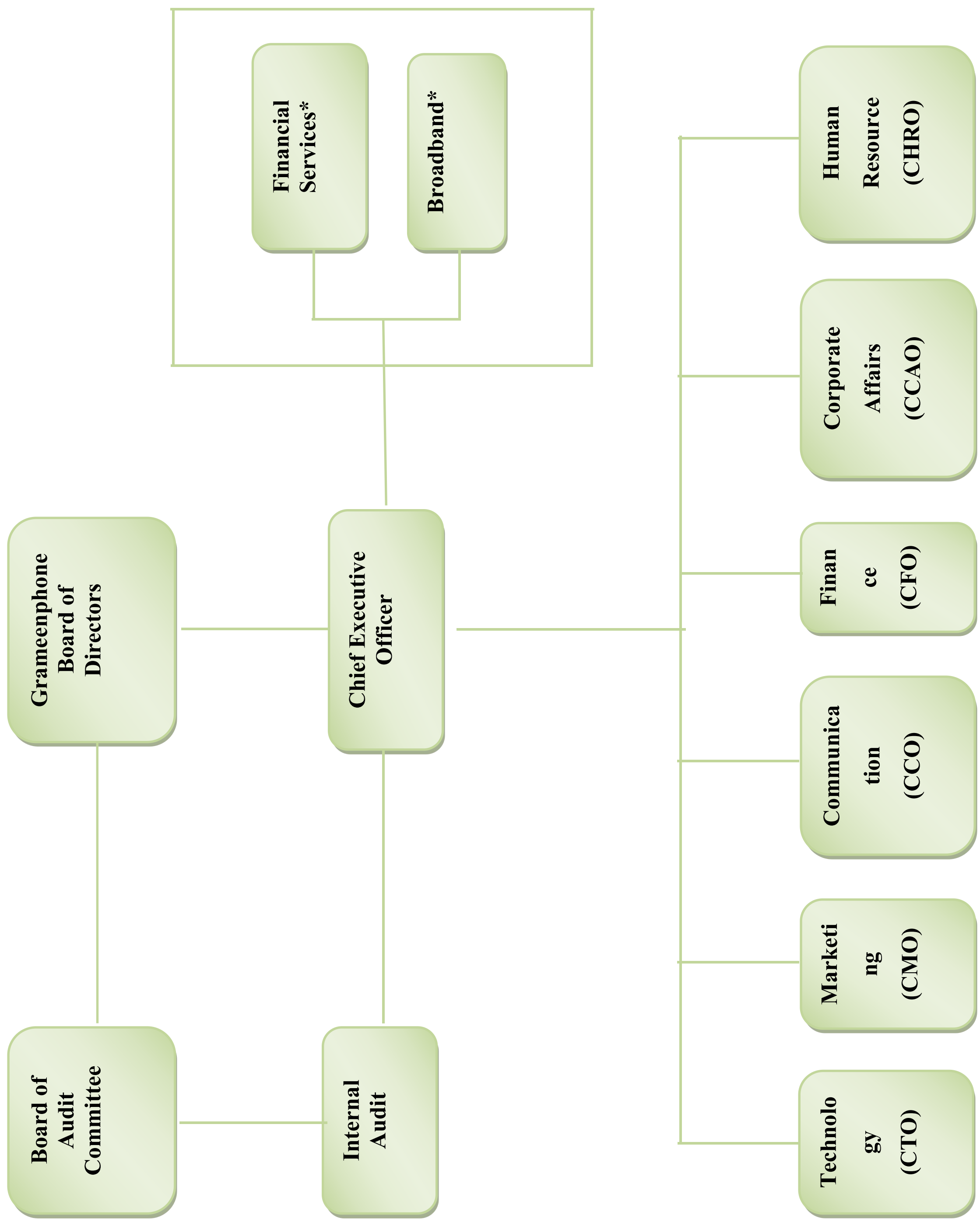

Figure 3.1 Organizational Chart

4.0 Financial Services Division at Grameenphone

Grameenphone has 2 special initiative divisions in its organizational structure. Among the two special initiatives one is Financial Services and another is Broadband. Financial Services Department actually controls the Bill Pay system. Grameenphone has two special initiatives under the direct supervision of CEO of Grameenphone.

Financial Services Department has three sections. Business Development, Business process, BillPay Operations are the three main sections of this department.

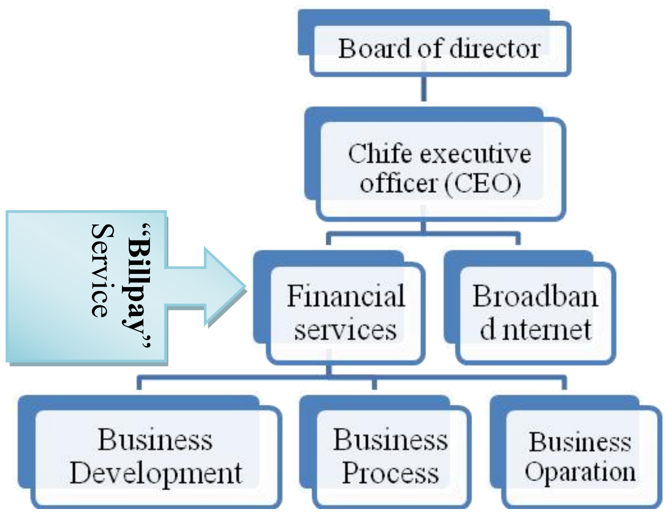

Figure: 1.0 Structure of Financial services department

4.1. Business Development

Business Development department basically looking for different types business opportunity. They analyze the feasibility of the business wither that business is profitable or not. If product is profitable then they prepare the feature of the product and make a proposal for concern authority for approval. If product approved by CEO, then its go for implementation.

4.2 Business Process or project implementation

When any product approved by concern authority then business process department go for implementation. Their main functions are to trained up the retailers and promote that product to target customer. They also test the customer acceptance, find and check the ways of any fraudulent activities.

4.3 BillPay Operation

BillPay Operation has very vest areas of work to complete. To find the business current position, solve the customers and retailers problem, solve different kinds of operation problems, do different types of reporting, analysis and based on the analysis best possible way to collect more bills. These are the main work of operation's team.

5.0 Grameenphone "Billpay service"

BillPay is a newly introduced service of Grameenphone through which a consumer can pay his utility bills any time through a Grameenphone authorized BillPay retailer or through his own GP mobile. Grameenphone's Billpay service brings a hassle free and secures solution to pay DPDC, DESCO, TITAS and PDB bill. Customer can easily pay their utility bills from their nearest Billpay marked shop or though their own GP mobile. To avoid the fully automated service, customer needs to register though SMS by typing Reg followed by space and type the company code followed by another space and then type the bill account number and send this SMS to 1200. As soon as registration complete, the PIN number sent from the system needs to be changed and from then on customer can start paying their utility bills from any Grameenphone authorized Billpay shop.

If the customer associated with the bill pay system then every month consumer get advance notification regarding their utility bill amount and due date of the bill. When customer pays its utility with the Billpay system then customer again gets a successful SMS in its registered mobile number. Any GP mobile subscriber can pay its utility bill by Billpay service. Non GP subscriber can also pay their bill by Grameenphone authorized dealer. A minimum service charge is taken by the shop operator. The charge is follows.

Bill Amount	Service Charge	Bill Amount	Service Charge
Up to 400 taka	BDT 5	Between 1501 to 5000 taka	BDT 15
Between 401 to 1500 taka	BDT 10	Above 5000 taka	BDT 25

Figure: 5.0 Commission of “Billpay” service.

In recent month’s numbers of utility company shown their interest in this automated payment system. As soon as possible some other company will contract with Garmeenphone billpay service to collect their revenue.

6.0 Features of “Billpay”

There are some attractive features in Billpay system, which is mentioned in below.

- ***6.1 Full automated system***
- ***6.2 Automatic and instant update in utility company account***
- ***6.3 Instant payment acknowledgement***
- ***6.4 Grameenphone is by customer side in any difficulty***
- ***6.5 Payment record keeping***

6.1 Full automated system:

- The Billpay is a complete automated system, this system controlled by software which is known as mMONEY . This server based software records all the transaction with details. People can pay their bill any time whenever they want.

6.2 Automatic and instant update in utility company account:

- Billpay ensure that payment is instant transferred to respective utility company for immediate ledger posting.

6.3 Instant payment acknowledgement:

- Instant notification to associated mobile number to confirm that payment has been received accurately.
- Seal, signature and money receipt and one unique transaction ID also provided by the retailer on behalf of grameenphone ltd.

6.4 Payment record keeping

- Anyone can check his or her payment status. To know the verbal confirmation customer can call to Billpay hot line, instantly they can know details about their bill payment.
- There is another way to know the keep the record, if customer wants its billpay history, then customer need to go nearest grameenphone customer care (GPC) they will give them a statement which is similar of bank account statement.

6.5 Grameenphone is by customer side in any difficulty

- GP allows stand by a customer in case any dispute arises from utility company regarding any of the payments though billpaby; to get such assistant one has to call the Billpay call center.

7.0 Task performed

Among the three sections in Financial Services I was in BillPay operation section. My core job was correct the error in transaction. At the beginning I just did error correction. But later other responsibilities assigned on me step by step. Besides error correction I have to do few more works, like, they are - check the Customer Insight Management System for customer and retailers complain and solve them. Also check CIMS for faxes sent by retailers. Complete outbound calls to customers, give over phone training to retailers and update the retailer database. Brief description of my job responsibilities are as follows:

- ***7.1 Collect the complain from system***
- ***7.2 Adjust the Mistakes***
- ***7.3 Check Customer Insight Agent***
- ***7.4 Outbound Calls***
- ***7.5 Over Phone Training***
- ***7.6 Update Retailer Database***
- ***7.7 Late inform problem***
- ***7.8 Letter making for utility company for correction***
- ***7.9 Error Correction (PROCESS)***

7.1 Collect the complain from system

Every day I have to print the customer complain from APPCOM automated complain management system, then I have to manage complain by its payment date. My main responsibility is to find out the bill payment error. According to complain I have to take the action to correct the problems.

7.2 Adjust the Mistakes

My core job was to adjust the mistakes occurred in the transactions of TITAS gas, DPDC & PDB. As the subscriber of TITAS, DPDC & PDB can give extra or amount excess to their total bill, the retailer sometimes made mistake during bill payment. Like – if the customer had the bill of TK. 482, the retailer mistakenly paid TK. 842. Then I have to call the retailer & told them that the extra amount will be adjusted in the next month bill. Retailers have to collect the money from customer as we cannot back the money to the retailers.

7.3 Check Customer Insight Agent

Customer Insight Agent is software used by the Customer Service Division. BillPay service has a dedicated call canter. They have to keep record of every call come to the hotline. Customer Service department keep the problems and try to solve those. If they find any problem that they can't solve they leave the problems unsolved. That is the point where my duty starts. I pick those unsolved complains and solve them. Most of the problems I solve with the help of mMoney software and talked with customer or retailer. There are few problems I can't solve then I ask for my supervisors help. My supervisor solved those problems. There was another important cause I check CIA. For correction of error, retailers send fax to the GP fax number. Complaint Management receives those faxes and they posted those fax through CIA. I collected those faxes, printed them and kept them in file. Sometimes retailers inform their mistakes through call center. I also collected those complains and corrected the errors.

7.4 Outbound Calls

Sometimes I have to do some outbound calls to the customers. This was an initiative by my supervisor to remind the customer who paid their bills once or twice and after that they did not pay their bills. We named it “win back” calls. I called to the customer and asked whether they are facing any problem that they are not paying their bills through BillPay. I listened their problems gave them encouragement and positive sides of the service. There is an option in BillPay system. The option is if the retailer tag a mobile number against the account number of a customer then the customer will get a confirmation SMS that his bill has been paid successfully as like as flexi load. It is not necessary that only GP subscriber will get SMS, any other operator will get the confirmation SMS if he tag his phone number in the system. We called it customer association. Sometimes I have to call to the retailers to guide that they should associate customer phone number because that ensures transparency of their transaction.

7.5 Over Phone Training

Sales and distribution team is responsible for ensuring the training of retailer. But sometimes operation proactively takes the responsibilities to train the retailers. I called the retailer to train them and to make understand the process of BillPay. Again it is important to add new features to the USSD menu which is used for BillPay process. When the process team adds new option to that menu then I have to call to the retailer to know about their training status. After finishing these call backs I have to give feedback to my supervisor.

7.6 Update Retailer Database

Retailers are the very important part of Financial Services. They are the channel partner of Grameenphone. Actual the retailers do the execution part of the BillPay service. As an operation team we have to keep frequent contact with the retailer and we try to solve each complain of the retailers as early as possible. The retail channel of Grameenphone is very strong and Grameenphone controls the channel very organized way. Under Sales and Distribution team there are Distribution houses. There are many SE works under a distribution house. Actually these SE controls the retailer, give them load and help them to operate BillPay service. As we need to contact the retailers very frequently we have to maintain a database and keep it up to date. So, it was one of my duties to update the database contains retailer name, flexi SIM, alternative contact number, name and contact numbers SE's and distributor. The database was very important for me also as I had to call the retailers.

7.7 Late inform problem

Some time customer made the mistake during the bill payment and most of the time they cannot discover their own problem within given time. When they realize they made mistake then they inform bill pay hot line. If the complain do not receive within current mount then that complain goes to late inform file. My responsibility is to record the transaction in excel sheet and check the transaction from system whether this transaction is valid or not. If transaction is valid then I have take the needful for that complain.

7.8 Letter making for utility company for correction

Another responsibility was to make the letter for respective utility company for error correction. I have to prepare two different type of letter. One is for bill month error and another one is for customer code error. Some time retailer made mistake in both bill number and account number. To solve this types of problem I have to prepare another type of letter to the deputy manager of respective company particularly TITAS.

7.9 Way of Error Correction

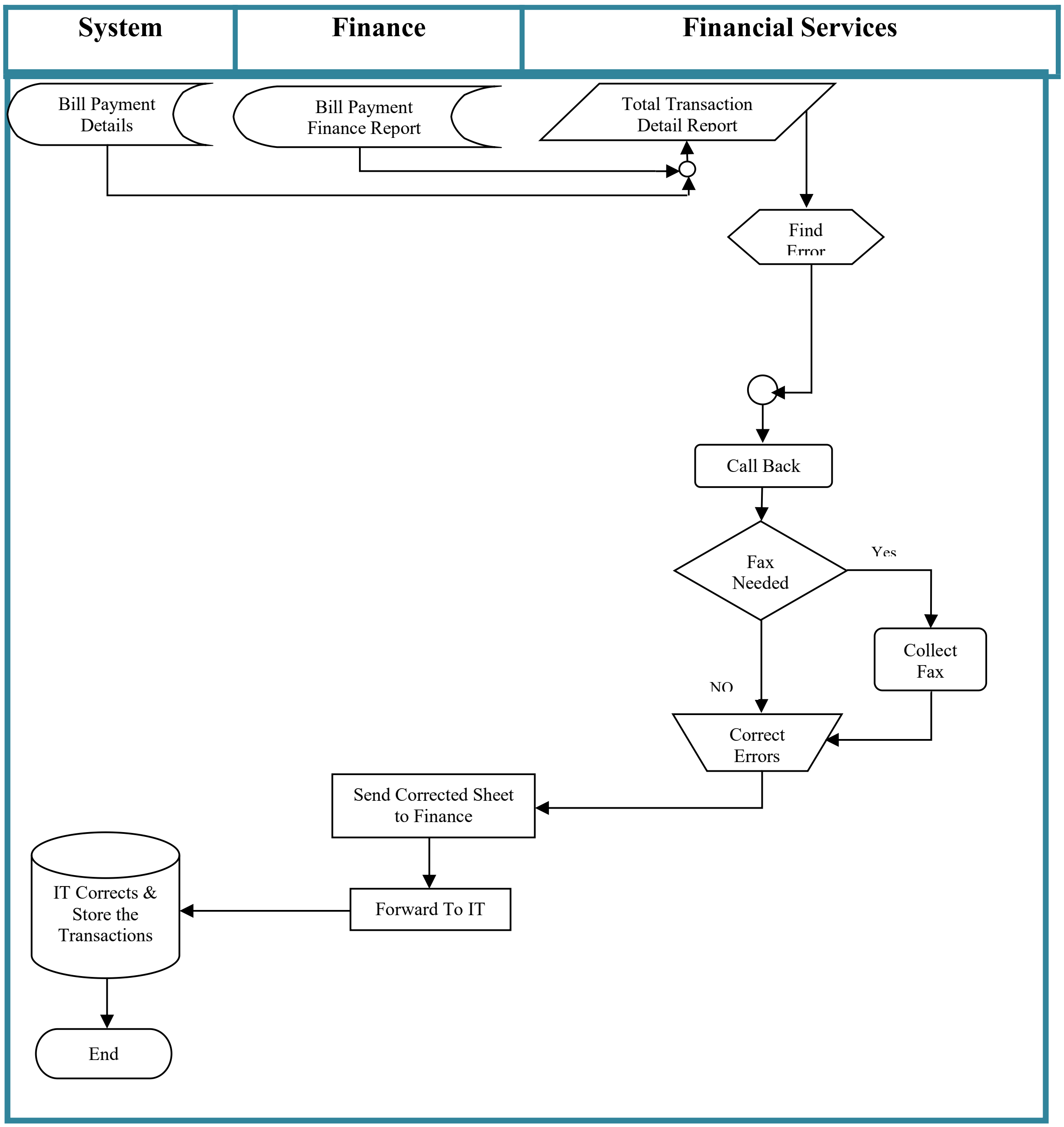

Figure: 8.1 Process of error correction and record keeping.

9.0 Problems Identified

Most of the utility companies are government owned and generally these companies are very skeptical of any private company especially when it's comes matter of technology. There are some others problem mentioned in below.

- ***9.1 Data management problem***
- ***9.2 Legal problem***
- ***9.3 Shortage of Customer trust***
- ***9.4 Unfamiliar with New technological service***
- ***9.5 Slow adoption***
- ***9.6 Lacking of training***
- ***9.7 Lacking of promotion***
- ***9.8 Data management problem***
- ***9.9 Late response***

9.1 Data management problem

Billpay is complete automated utility bill payment system. The basic thing for this system is bill data upload in server before due date. The sever problem is that utility official most of the time do not aware abut matter. For that reasons so many customer can't able to pay its bill though the bill pay system.

9.2 Legal problem

Generally any new agreement takes huge time than expected and a procedure of negotiation with the utility company take long time.

9.3 Shortage of Customer trust:

Among the recognized companies subscribers approximate 30% people take this service and other left portion still do not believe the billpay. They trust seal, sign,date etc but not automated easy system.

9.4 Unfamiliar with New technological service:

As the service is technologically new, not much people are aware of related technicalities. So prepare the people to use and get used with this new technological innovation takes time and a lot of expertise needed as well. Some technical difficulties came out that time to time caused some problem for customer but those problems have dealt competently and turned into conveniences later.

9.5 Slow adoption:

People in Bangladesh are not much tech-savvy so naturally it takes time to adopt a new process. And especially when paying utility bill standing in long queues in banks has been a traditional that has been going on for years in Bangladesh. I this sate the adoption rate for bill pay service will take time to increase.

9.6 Lacking of training

Most of the recognized Grameenphone retailers still confuse how to pay utility bill though its flexi SIM. During my internship I have talk with so many retailers for different issue particularly bill payment error. Almost all the retailer claimed they didn't get any training session. For that result so many retailer make mistake during the bill payment.

9.7 Lacking of promotion

As a developing country Bangladesh peoples do not much more aware regarding advance mobile technology. Garmeenphone didn’t take any mass promotional activities which is easy understandable to mass people. Grameenphone have some ad which is not enough for introducing a new technology to general peoples.

9.8 Delayed response

The most common scenario of utility company is that, they do not work on time. Most of the time Billpay authority has to go utility company to upload the data, because if data not uploaded in respective utility company server then the Grameenphone cannot able to download the Bill data in their own server. If data is not uploaded in GP server retailer can’t pay the customer bill.

10.0 Recommendation

- ***10. 1 Educating utility company***
- ***10.2 Increasing interaction between utility company and Grameenphone***
- ***10.3 Prepare TITAS data base***
- ***10.4 Proper communication of benefits***
- ***10.5 Grameenphone should provide Bill statement to customer***

10.1 Educating utility company

It is great important that for the increasing the understanding of Billpay service though mobile phone, utility companies should be informed well by several presentation as they are also a part of this service. If they are not properly educated with that new technology, Grameenphone can't increase customer awareness. Utility companies should be encourage to promote this service within the legality of the formal contract as of people of our country relies more on conventional service providers rather than new service provider.

10.2 Increasing interaction between utility company and Grameenphone

There should be more meeting between the Grameenphone and utility companies to develop an understanding for their mutual benefits. If both party full aware of the benefits they can acquire for the Billpay service, proper support will not be generated from both sides to make this procedure enduring and effective.

10.3 Prepare TITAS data base

The utility company TITAS gas transmitting company should make a strong error free customer data base. Because TITAS has not any digital computerized data base for customer for that reasons, system take all the date whatever retailer send to system and it show the successful transaction even if the transaction is wrong. But most of the utility company prepared computerized customer data base. Suppose DESCO, DPDC utility company do not face any difficulties during bill payment due to computerized data base system. Titas should be prepared their data base for any cost.

10.4 Proper communication of benefits:

Benefits of the Billpay service should be presented to the utility company from their point of view instead of Grameenphone point of views. Moreover timely suggestions and feedback should be taken from them as they are fully aware of the need of their customer and they can communicate their customer demands to Grameenphone in a much convenient way. At the same time, Grameenphone has to maintain close monitoring to customer attitude to understand their reaction towards the Billpay service.

10.5 Grameenphone should provide Bill statement to customer:

Grameenphone should provide bill payment statement to the custome after each six month though the courier service to gain customer satisfaction. If Grameenphone do so I think number of payment would be double within next sex month. The reason is people still think before its bill payment though the Billpay service whether bill will be paid to the respective utility company or not. So it will be more effective if GP provide the bill payment statement after each certain period of time.

11.0 Conclusion

Grameenphone is the leading telecommunications service provider in the country. Everyday Grameenphone introduces modern technology and provides many technological facilities to their customer. To get a chance of internship in Grameenphone was an immense chance. It was a great opportunity to complete my internship in Grameenphone. The experience was full of pleasure, new ideas and new discovers. The type of learning was totally practical and beyond the theoretical things. Before this internship chance I only heard about the corporate culture but the internship gave me the opportunity to convert the academic knowledge into practical knowledge. My performed job helped me to learn many things. I got the experience to make the customer and retailer convince. Over phone training helped me to get the glimpse of a trainer. From my supervisor I got to learn about the decision making and leadership. Solving the critical problems was a good lesson for me. In a total the internship program gave me the chance to think in a broad way, amount of dedication need in a work, how to become a team player and also taught me to think deeper. I think this experience will help me a lot in my future life. I also say that I learned how different team work together to achieve a defiant target and finally come a full and final product in market. Finally I should say it's a imaging experience I acquired though my internship which will help me in my near future.

12.0 References

- Grameenphone Ltd. Annual Report 2007
- Grameenphone, 17th April, 2009, @work, Grameenphone, Bangladesh.
- http://portal.transitt.telenor.no/index.jsp?viewresourceandid=138086
- www.prothom-alo.com
- Grameenphone, 17th April, 2009.
- www.grameenphone.com
- www.bangladeshbank.org
- http://portal.transitt.telenor.no/index.jsp?namID=TPN_932_1806