TELECOM RETAIL BILLING

When we talk about telecom billing then by default it is about retail billing. As defined earlier, telecom retail billing is defined as follows:

Telecom Billing is a process of collecting usage, aggregating it, applying required usage and rental charges and finally generating invoices for the customers. Telecom Billing process also includes receiving and recording payments from the customers.

Retail billing deals directly with the end customer and comes with lot of challenges to meet end customer expectations and regulatory obligations. A billing is assumed to be successful as long as it is fulfilling following criteria:

- **Timely Billing:** End customer's invoice is being generating on time, i.e., nominal date. There may be some circumstances when end customer does not get their invoices on time because of some logistic issues, but it is IT's responsibility to generate all the due bills on due date.

- **Billing Accuracy:** This is the most important factor for the customer satisfaction and from regulatory obligation point of view. If billing system is not generating accurate bills, then it can lead to serious business issues from legality point of view as well as leaving a customer in unhappy state.

Retail vs Wholesale Billing:

Retail billing deals with end customer and billing an individual customer whereas wholesale billing deals with billing to the following entities depending on situation and nature of business:

- Billing resellers associated with a telecom operator.

- Billing interconnect partners for providing interconnection to make calls to another operator's customers.

- Billing roaming partners for providing services to their customers when they roamed in an operator's coverage area.

Wholesale billing is easy in comparison to retail billing and allows a big level of threshold of tolerance whereas retail billing always needs to be 100% accurate. Wholesale billing can never be 100% accurate because of various reasons like difference in prices configured in two operators' systems or difference in number of calls rated because some of the calls may get missed at any network element.

There are specialized billing systems, which are being used to handle retail billing like Convergys and Amdocs Billing systems are famous for retail billing whereas ASCADE and INTEC billing systems are famous for wholesale billing.

Wholesale billing can also be settled using retail billing systems by using simple reports because they do not deal with too many discounts and promotion types whereas retail billing needs all these complications and can not be handled using wholesale billing systems.

All the concepts discussed so far in this tutorial were related to retail billing and subsequent chapters will discuss about interconnect billing, roaming billing and other billing types.