

When a Support Call Becomes Billable

The Software Support Account (SSA) plan at MBA Business Software offers “unlimited help desk calls” at no incremental charge beyond the monthly base fee. Does this mean that I’ll never be billed for a phone call to MBA?

The answer is no, you may be billed for a phone call to MBA depending on the nature of the call. Most calls from our clients fall into the category of *Customer Support*. These are calls into our help desk center for assistance in using the supported accounting software and associated operating system environment. They may be questions about a pop-up error box, how to perform certain tasks, or what something means. What all of these calls have in common is that MBA is giving explanations, instructions, standard procedures or directions and you are performing the necessary tasks to resolve the cause for the call. The flat rate monthly SSA fee covers all such calls and there is no additional billing.

However, some calls will require MBA staff to provide additional professional services. These calls are in the *Technical Services* category and can originate as such or evolve from a help desk call. The differentiating characteristic of this type of call is that MBA is actively performing a requested task to create a deliverable product, directly cause a result, or investigate and report on characteristics unique to your installation. Any amount of time that is expended in performing technical services for you is billable at our published rates. Often, the classification between a non-billable Customer Support call and a billable Technical Services call is not known until some preliminary problem determination is complete. A support call will usually become billable whenever you give us a task to perform. If the status of your call is not clear, please discuss it with our support technician.

An example of a support call that would become billable is a question of how to find certain information within your accounting data where you subsequently ask us to analyze your business requirements and develop one or more custom reports. Questions about how a software feature works can become billable if you ask us to research and explain to you how using the feature will affect your business procedures. An “out-of-balance” support question can become billable if you ask us to review your data and reconcile the results of an update. An “Error #47: Substring reference out of range” pop-up error can turn into a billable task if we have to manually recover data from your file, whether we access your data remotely or have you send it to us.

An important eligibility requirement for MBA Customer Support is a minimal level of product knowledge and computer literacy. While we can answer most operational questions over the telephone, it is not possible for us to provide user training by phone. This is best done in a one-on-one or classroom setting. Occasionally, we may be unable to provide help desk support because the end-user is not well enough versed in either the product or the Microsoft Windows Operating System to understand and appreciate the explanations and directions of our support technician. In this case, we may require additional training or request a re-assignment of the customer’s support coordinator.