



Communications Inc.

HOME

SERVICES

RATES

ACCESS NUMBERS

ABOUT US

CONTACT US

ACTIVATE ACCOUNT

RECHARGE ACCOUNT

MANAGE ACCOUNT

CALL HISTORY

PAYMENT HISTORY

PHONE CARDS HISTORY



History

The history of Phone cards was most recently invented in 1975, in Europe by a small Vending Machine. However, it was not until 1986, that the calling card came to the [United States](#). Original calling cards were brought into production in [Italy](#) due to a large surge in payphone thefts and vandalisms. These cards were designed to be used on specific phones that were able to read their magnetic strip on the back of the cards. Unfortunately, these cards were not successful as they were too thin and would often get stuck in the phones. However, once the cards were remade, their popularity grew across Europe.

The World Telecom Group introduced the first large-scale card in 1987, which also contained the magnetic strip. [AT&T](#) then created their cards in 1989, which originated in Hawaii and was called the "Remote Telecommunications Prepaid Calling Card". It was New York's Regional [Bell](#) Operating Company that first offered the first card without the magnetic strip, and they were also the first to use a [PIN](#) number and toll-free access number. Finally, in 2001, the first disposable combination of a cell phone and calling card was created.

TimeLine

In the mid-1970's the Europeans created the new Prepaid phone cards. It was not until eleven years later that they finally reached the [USA](#). From that point on, the phone/calling card business grew throughout the world, and now they are sold around the world in over [185 countries](#) . Here is the actual timeline for the creation and growth.



1975: In the Fall of 1975, the company, SIDA, created the Phone cards. This company was not in the telecommunications industry, but was a manufacturer and supplier of vending machines.

1976: [Italy](#) was the first country that had prepaid phone cards produced in order to fight off vandalism of payphones. The cards were equipped with a magnetic strip on the back of them to be used in special phones, however, these cards would often get jammed because they were too thin.

1977: Prepaid calling cards that used the magnetic strip on the back quickly spread throughout Europe becoming very popular, particularly in [Austria](#), [Sweden](#), [France](#), and The [United Kingdom](#) .

1978: In 1978 in [Brazil](#) , Nelson G. Bardini created a system that used a series of coils embedded in the card which blows when the card was used up. The card was first seen in 1982 at a national inventors' exhibition.

1982: The [Japanese](#) company, [Nippon Telephone](#) and Telegraph introduced the first [Japanese pre-paid phone card](#) . A large coin was used to operate the payphones in the subways, which was considered to be much more convenient and was sold daily to thousands of subway riders in Osaka and Tokyo.

1984: The chip-based "smart cards" were experimented with in [France](#) .

1987: In the [USA](#), the World Telecom Group is the first company to create a significant phone-card product. GPT, a consortium formed by Siemens and [GEC](#) (General Electric Company), produced and distributed cards with their own magstripe technology. This is now among the most widely used magstripe cards.

1988: In [England](#) , Dr. Steve Hiscocks circulated the first catalog of telecards for phone card collectors.

1989: Hawaii introduces the first remote telecards through [AT&T](#) .

1990: The first non magnetic based calling card is introduced in the USA through [NYNEX](#) (New York's RBOC or Regional Bell Operating Company). These new prepaid calling cards offered the customers a [PIN](#) (Personal Identification Number) as a means of identification. Through an 800 number provided by NYNEX, the cardholder was able to enter his [PIN](#) to make a [long distance call](#) . This allowed the caller to make phone calls from any telephone anywhere in the U.S. without needing coins or incurring high bills from hotels.

1992: Companies such as Sprint and other major regional and [long distance phone](#) were now offering pre-paid phone cards. Revenues in the industry reached \$12 million with people predicting this number to double over the next several years. This projection proved to be drastically short of things to come.

1993: Phone card sales more than double and exceed \$25 Million.

1994: Calling card sales exceed \$250 Million.

1995: Bell Atlantic chooses to discontinue its calling card attempts and Sprint releases the "FONCARD". Sales hit \$650 million, and the US West provides the first chip-based prepaid cards.

1996: The \$1 Billion mark is reached and, American Express tests a trial prepaid calling card.

1997: Over \$2 Billion in sales are reached.

2000: Sales reach over \$3 Billion with no end in sight for their continued growing success. Predictions call for the calling card industry to reach 10 Billion dollars per year by the year 2010.

2001: The first disposable combination of a cell phone and calling card is created.

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