

O2 Insure
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23 July 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

(I apologise now that the dates referred to in this letter are vague - little did I know was going to have to remember them...)

In early March 2005, I was advised that the Nokia 6680 would be available on a date before the end of March. I called your national rate 0870 number on this date, only to be told that the launch date had been put back a week. Fair enough, I thought - these things happen. The operative then told me to qualify for a cheaper upgrade cost, I should upgrade my tariff from O2 100 to O2 200. I duly did this.

I called again the following week, only to be told again to call back the following week.

Had that been the end of the delays, I would have thought nothing of it. Had your operatives told me to phone again in three months time, I would have been annoyed but would have accepted it as the luck of the draw.

However, your operatives told me to call back every week for the next 10 weeks. On every phone call, I spent around 5 minutes or more each time at a cost of 30 pence a minute. I have logged the total call minutes on my phone bill as a wallet-breaking 62 minutes. That's £18.60 you've charged me, just to be told to call back next week. For this entire time, I was on your advised tariff that was too high for my usage - and therefore more expensive than I wanted - and unable to revert to my original tariff again as "you're not allowed to downgrade, sir."

Finally, in a moment of untold joy and over 10 weeks after you originally promised, you confirmed that the 6680 had been released and was offered Gold insurance. I accepted after confirming there was no alternative insurance (the operative was unable to give me a reason for this). I received the phone in the early afternoon a few days later and phoned straight through to register the new sim card. Sadly, your systems were down (not for the first time, as I'm sure your customers are aware). You told me to phone back in an hour. I phoned, and was told again to phone back in an hour. In a way that was

frighteningly familiar, I was told over the next four hours to phone back every hour - until I phoned at 5.55pm and was told that you "close at 6pm" (perhaps you were in a slightly different timezone) and to phone back the following day. Another 4 unnecessary phone calls, at a cost of around £1.20.

I eventually got the phone registered the next day and set about discovering it. I visited my girlfriend's two-year-old niece the following day, who promptly knocked the phone out of my hand onto some unwelcoming gravel. Cue a couple of scratches. I phoned your helpline to see what I could do about the scratches. You advised to fill in a claim form, and that "it should be no trouble to get the phone replaced." I duly did as I was told and sent the form back to Marsh who seem to "handle" your insurance. For five days, I waited for a response. Eventually, I called your national-rate line again from my car after a long and arduous day at work. I was put in a queue for the insurance line. FOR TWENTY MINUTES. When someone eventually answered, my phone signal was so low that she was unintelligible and I was forced to call back and sit in the queue again for another ten minutes. When someone eventually answered, you can imagine my wrath when the woman told me that my claim was unsuccessful as it was only cosmetic damage.

I have been pondering on the point of your Gold insurance ever since. It is surprisingly difficult to damage a phone you care for in a way other than cosmetically. If it was plain that the damage was cosmetic, why was I led to spend twenty minutes filling in a form - and waiting five days - only to be rejected so simply? Why is there a tickbox on the form for "cosmetic damage" when no-one with cosmetic damage should even see the form? And - last one, I promise - why wait until I am held in your expensive customer helpline for another dose of brain-numbing music to tell me this?

I am further surprised - although news like this has become less of a shock of late - that the £5 a month insurance cannot now be cancelled.

I have called you so much over the past few months that I can recite your number without thinking. In addition to the calls listed above, there were several others that I decided to let pass in this sorry chronicle. In all, I estimate that I have spent just shy of 110 minutes - or £33 - to your ironically-titled customer service line. As to the availability of the phone in the first instance - if I were cynical, I would point out that you must have sold a whole lot more Nokia 6630's while you delayed the launch of the 6680.

But I am not a cynical man. I am, however, a considerably poorer one as a result of your failings, while you will be considerably richer. I joined O2 because you were able to offer lower charges for my call profile than your competitors. After entering this false economy, I can now see where the savings were made.

I realise that mistakes can be made in an organisation such as yours, but I draw the line when I have to pay for them. As recompense, I would like reimbursement for the countless minutes and money I have wasted on the phone to your team, as well and the inconvenience through no fault of my own.

I look forward to your reply.