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NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2007
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Poor service, but stuck in a contract?

An editorial rant – and maybe we can help!

We hear this all the time, but lately it seems to be increasing. We don't intend for this to sound like we're carping about our competition, but the practices of some others in our industry have become so aggressive that we're writing this as a heads-up to our customers, so you can pass a word of caution to your friends, family, neighbors and colleagues.

When a new Internet service comes to town, they usually attract new customers with slick advertising and attractive promotional rates, often waiving fees or offering even better rates for longer-term contracts. And, because these ISPs initially have very few users, there is little load on their local network and performance can be very good at first.

Over time that usually begins to change. Rates go up as the introductory specials expire, and as more subscribers are added performance can deteriorate if the ISP is not vigilant – typically, most are not.

Then the trap becomes clear. Those who experience declining performance and want to cancel their service discover that their ISP requires a steep cost penalty for early contract termination. It may have been in the original multi-pages of legal fine print, but it certainly hadn't been pointed out to them at sign-up, and this often comes as a big surprise.

So then, unless the equivalent of up to maybe six months at normal service rates is acceptable as an early-out penalty, they're stuck.

But there's more, and it can get even worse. Large collections of consumer feedback are available online at Better Business Bureaus and at websites like www.broadbandreports.com. All of the major ISPs can be found, including those operating locally – DSL, cable, and wireless – and it can be an eye-opener to look into the stories that others have posted. Many sound very much like what we're hearing.

For example, some ISPs offer a short free trial period during which the customer can withdraw with no obligation. However, it is very interesting to browse through the individual reports and notice how so many describe excellent service during the free trial period, while only thereafter did service begin to deteriorate.

How could that happen? Reports like that seem to be common even in areas where service had been available for quite some time, so it can't be directly related to the number of subscribers on the system. In other words, even in areas where there were already lots of customers, those who were

new subscribers always reported that their service was excellent during the free trial period ... then it started to slip, but by then the early termination penalties had been triggered.

So, hmmm. Would it be possible to design some programming controls that would allow maximum priority service to new customers until a certain calculated trigger date – say, after the end of a free trial period for example – and then automatically switch them into the main pool with everyone else?

The answer is absolutely yes, something like that would require only some very simple programming. We can't say this is happening, but there are definitely some interesting coincidences going on.

Can it get worse? Well, yes. Again, if you read the fine print in an ISP contract, you may find that it is the customer's responsibility to notify their ISP if they do not intend to renew their contract at the end of its term. Some ISPs – operating

Continued on Side Two



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Stuck in a contract?

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locally – actually require this notification in writing, at least 30 days before the end of the contract term, otherwise they will renew a contract automatically, with all of its incumbent early termination penalties, for a new term. This is spelled out in the well-hidden terms of service on the ISP's website, but it is not clarified for new customers during the sales pitch.

So, why again are we bothering to write about this? Our business is good and growing steadily despite the constant come-and-go of competitors, even the large ones. So why do we care? Well, that's why – because we care. We care about deceitful practices that, although legal, are clearly designed to trap unwary customers into very binding contracts.

These practices give our industry a bad name, and even OCS gets painted with the same broad brush. Increasingly, we find that potential new customers who are enquiring about our service put us through the third degree, because they're suspicious – understandably – due to the experiences they've had with other ISPs.

Brokers and investors place a high value on contracts. Without binding contracts, they ask, how can a company reliably forecast future revenue from its subscribers, since they can leave any time they want to?

Well, at OCS we've never required contracts and never will. Yet we've been able to accurately forecast our revenues for a long time ... how? Because we retain a very high number of our customers through good service and support at a fair price. Yes, it's really that simple, that's really all it takes.

So why can't the big-name ISPs do that too? They could, but their focus is

on revenue and the bottom line, rather than on QoS (quality of service). Their networks are run on strict budgets in order to maximize fast profits and drive up their stock prices – so they have to lock their customers into binding contracts because they have no other way to retain them. It's only numbers.

However, if an ISP provides true QoS, customer loyalty – and revenue – will follow. But ongoing QoS requires ongoing investment in the network to make sure that growing subscriber counts do not compromise service to other customers, and that would affect stock prices for the big-name ISPs. They can't risk that, so instead they have to rely on promotional hype, and their legal departments.

So if you're an investor, consider the big names. But if you want to follow and manage your stock portfolio with reliable high-speed Internet service, go to OCS. And tell your friends, family, neighbors and colleagues to ask questions – and be sure to read the fine print!

Stuck in a contract?

Show us your binding paperwork and we may waive up to \$100 from your OCS startup costs...



Fan Mail "I can get on the Internet but then I'm kicked off. I am almost in tears, I don't know what to do. My ISP (not OCS!) is awful, I am so upset with them." ST, 8/07
(We suggested that she call her ISP, but she didn't have their phone number – so we found it for her.)



Help us celebrate! OCS turned 25 in February, the company was started in a home office in 1982. We've had our 25-year logo printed on a selection of glassware as gifts for our customers, please stop by the office and choose yours! We have mugs in three colors, tall mixing (pint) glasses, and etched wine glasses. While they last, limit two per customer!

I Didn't Know That!

OCS provides "A-to-Z" computer technology services:

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Plan Name	Average Speeds			B-M-W ¹	One-Time Fees			Monthly Service
	Min	Typ	Max		Service Activation	Install/Configure	Equipment Deposit	
1 Bandwidth-Mailboxes-Webpace (see notes)								
DIALUP	26K	40K	53K	1-5-5	25.00	-	-	24.95
Accelerator	Typically 2-5X faster			-	-	-	-	+5.00
WIRELESS STANDARD 2.4 GHz								
24 Basic	125K	500K	750K	10-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	49.95 ^{2,3}
24 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	79.95 ^{2,3}
24 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95 ^{2,3}
WIRELESS SPECIAL CASES 900 MHz (where available)								
900 Basic	125K	375K	750K	5-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	59.95 ^{4,5}
WIRELESS MISSION CRITICAL 5.8 GHz (where available)								
58 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	99.95
58 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95
58 Professional	500K	2M	3M	25-25-25	25.00	100.00	100.00	159.95
58 Corporate	750K	3M	4M	30-30-30	25.00	100.00	100.00	199.95
58 Enterprise	1M	4M	5M	40-40-40	25.00	100.00	100.00	249.95

All plans include automated central email virus scanning, email spam filtering, and website parental controls. Some plan types permit webpace for personal use only. Wireless installation and deposit package may be paid in installments upon request. All speeds are symmetrical (same for upload and download) within the OACYS network only. All plans terminate at OACYS Porterville headquarters and transport to the Internet via dual T3s over dedicated OC12 fiber optic circuit. All plans subject to change without notice. Pricing and terms are current at the date of this newsletter and supersede previous versions. For footnotes 2,3,4,5 surcharges may apply. Please check with our office for additional details.

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