

How To Protect Your GSM Phone

Powerful Solutions Against Phone Loss and Theft

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Bonus Chapter:

Chapter 6: Top 10 Problems of GSM Subscribers

There is no doubt that GSM has brought new opportunities, new possibilities and a new way of looking at communication in Nigeria. The three GSM network operators, Econet Wireless, MTN and Nitel GSM have been engaged in a “GSM Gospel race” to get as many converts as possible. It seems to be working too! As at August 2002, when GSM clocked its first year in Nigeria, there were over 1 million GSM subscribers .

But one area that the network operators have not fared very well has been in educating the GSM subscribers on GSM telephony itself. This ignorance is the major caused of the problems being faced by subscribers. It is also the cause of much of the criticism being laced on the networks themselves. Until subscribers are properly educated on GSM, they will continue to blame the Operators for every thing.

So here they are, in no particular order: the Top 10 problems of GSM Subscribers.



Problem #1:

Ignorance On How GSM Routes Calls And Its Health Effects, If Any.

Most people don't understand how GSM routes calls. They don't understand how important the incumbent operator, Nitel is to the whole equation. If they only knew that Nitel, not known for efficiency, must carry virtually every call, subscribers will criticize the GSM networks less.

When you try to make a call and you receive a "System is Busy" message, it could mean a lot of things. Too many people may be trying to make calls at the same time. Even if your call makes it through, it would have to compete with others to pass through the limited "E1" lines provided by Nitel.

It is true that the GSM Operators are responsible for the congestion because they have sucked in more subscribers than they can handle. It is also true that we can't get through Nitel numbers because Nitel have not provided enough infrastructures.

The same goes for "dropped" calls and "per minute" billing.

Subscribers are yet to understand how these things are done and so they feel cheated by the GSM operators. For example, when you are calling while driving and you move to an area where there is no coverage, your call will be cut off. This also applies to the person you are calling. It is only when both of you are stationary and the call cuts off then you can rightly blame the GSM operators.

Another problem is the price of airtime tariffs. If the Government wants the GSM operators to reduce their prices, they should first of all tell Nitel to reduce the N12 they collect for terminating each call. They should also reduce what they collect as tax of Telecom equipment. The GSM operators have also given some conditions that should be looked into.

As long as people don't understand what goes into the calculation of airtime tariff, they will continue to blame the GSM operators.

Ignorance of the health effect of using GSM Cellphone is also causing unnecessary concern among subscribers. Will Cellphones cause explosions? If yes, why haven't we had such explosions yet?

(There are certain conditions that must be met for an explosion to occur. Please read the GSM Today (Issue #6) article "GSM Explosion??? Nah!" at the end of this Chapter.

The truth is that for every "scientific" study that says GSM phones cause problems, there are other "scientific" studies that say GSM phones are safe.

The next problems that plague GSM subscribers concerns the value-added services that they don't enjoy because of ignorance.

Problem #2:

Cannot Set Up And Use The Voicemail Service.

Problem #3:

Cannot Set Up Call Forwarding To Their Voicemail.

Problem #4:

Do Not Specifying Their Phone Numbers In Voicemail Messages.

When the GSM networks launched their voicemail services in 2001, they had less than 200,000 combined subscribers. During that period, they put out newspaper adverts showing what to do to activate and use the voicemail services. Today in November 2002, they have 1 million plus subscribers! Unfortunately, these new subscribers don't even know that they have such services.

Another problem: the services are not automatic but require that the subscriber make a call to set it up. How can subscribers set up what they don't know?

A solution could be the User's Guides. Yes, the GSM networks all gave out User Guides to new subscribers. MTN's Pay As you Go User's Guide is far better and helpful than Econet Wireless and Nitel GSM (which is yet to launch its voicemail service).

With MTN's Guide, you are shown what to do to set up your voicemail and even activate Call Forwarding and other services. Econet Wireless User Guide for Buddie and Nitel's User Guide for Rose Pay As You Talk are not detailed enough to help a subscriber do these things themselves.

The general public is also yet to fully understand modern telecommunication services like the voicemail partly because, our dear incumbent Nitel never provided such facilities. The result is interesting. Some people are surprised to hear your voicemail message. Some are at loss on what to do next and so they just keep silent and do nothing.

So here is what ignorance is doing:

- Subscribers are not enjoying their free voicemail service.
- Subscribers are forced to depend on the customer service for answers to simple questions that could have been answered in the User Guide's.

- Confused Callers are not leaving messages in voicemail.

Problem #5:

Forgetting To Identify Themselves In Text Messages (SMS).

This is very common and annoying. Subscribers just send messages and assume that the recipient will know who they are. The proper way is to always end your text messages with your name. But can you blame subscribers? Almost all GSM subscribers are self-taught. There is no "GSM Training school".

Problem #6:

Unknowingly Locking Their Phones By Entering The Wrong Pin.

Econet Wireless and Nitel activated the SIM locks in the SIM cards they issued to their subscribers. Unfortunately, subscribers are finding it difficult to always remember to enter the correct PIN number EVERY TIME they turn on their Cellphone.

The result? If they enter the wrong PIN incorrectly 3 times, it blocks your Cellphone! Nitel GSM did not give its Royal subscribers the PUK (Personal Unblocking Key) so they have to go to the Nitel Office whenever they lock their phones.



By the way, anyone should be able to unblock his or her phones.

You can read how to in "Unblocking Your Phone" (GSM Today, Issue #9) at the end of this Chapter.

Problem #7:

Cannot Differentiate The GSM Network In Their Phone Numbers.

Most subscribers have taken to the wrong practice of jumbling all their phone numbers together. It is common to see 08021234567. It is difficult to read and remember. Most subscribers don't know that Econet Wireless, MTN and Nitel have different operator's codes that are, 0802 for Econet Wireless, 0803 for MTN, and 0804 for Nitel GSM.

The correct way is to separate the operator code and the numbers with dashes like this: 0802-123-4567.

Problem #8:

Incorrectly Charging Their Cellphones.

GSM Subscribers who have been recharging their cellphones indiscriminately run the risk of ruining their Cellphone batteries. This is because the common Nickel-Hydride batteries don't require recharging UNLESS it has fully run out. These kinds of batteries are in the cheapest and common handsets like the Motorola T180.

The information is available in most Cellphone User's Guides but how many people ever bother to read it?

And so once again, ignorance of how to properly charge their Cellphone batteries will caused problems for GSM subscribers.

Problem #9:

Inadequate protection of their Cellphones.

Most GSM subscribers walk around with unprotected phones, relying on the SIM card locks activated by the GSM networks which doesn't give full protection. When the phone gets stolen or missing, there is nothing to trace the phone back to them! A better method is to lock the phone itself not the SIM card and to include your contact address in the battery compartment.

Problem #10:

No Knowledge Of The Steps To Take When They Lose Their Cellphone.

We will conclude this Chapter by looking at what steps you should take to stamp out ignorance of GSM.

First of all you must read all you can. GSM Today was created just for that: GSM subscribers' education. The COMPASS section is designed to help you find out more about GSM. It features links to free Telecommunications magazines that you can subscribe to. There are also a list of newspapers and the day GSM is featured.



You can go to the Econet Wireless and MTN web sites and read their Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Go to the sites that teach about Cellphones and learn all you can. Read, read, and read.

The GSM Network Operators too have a role to play. Part of the reasons they are having a lot of complaints is because they have not invested time to educate their GSM Subscribers. That is why Econet Wireless "Wireless Talk", that was published every week until august 2002 was a very good step.

MTN and Nitel GSM must put out regular information to their GSM Subscribers that will go beyond the usual full-paged adverts. All the GSM Network operators need to also create web sites for their Nigerian operations.

Unfortunately, GSM is still in its infancy in the country. There are no books, videos, CD-ROMs, or TV programs currently available to help GSM Subscribers know more about GSM Telephony. That will change some day, but until then, GSM Today E-zine will continue to give out quality information on the GSM sector in Nigeria.

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Sagai John Adam is the Editor of GSM Today E-zine, which is Nigeria's FIRST E-zine dedicated to helping people "recover their GSM investments". To SUBSCRIBE enter your email address

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Further Reading

Read these past articles from GSM Today with Solutions to some of these problems:



**** Hello Congestion! (Issue #2)**

To read it, click this link:

<http://www.freelists.org/archives/gsmtoday/02-2002/fullthread1.html>

**** GSM Explosion??? Nah! (Issue #6)**

<http://www.freelists.org/archives/gsmtoday/03-2002/fullthread1.html>

**** Unblocking Your Phone (Issue #9)**

**** The Beginning of WI-SMS-DOM Part 3 (Issue #9)**

To read them, click this link:

<http://www.freelists.org/archives/gsmtoday/03-2002/fullthread4.html>

**** Common GSM Blunders (Issue #15)**

To read it click this link:

<http://www.freelists.org/archives/gsmtoday/05-2002/fullthread2.html>

**** Preparing for the Evil Day (Issue #7)**

To read it click this link:

<http://www.freelists.org/archives/gsmtoday/03-2002/fullthread2.html>