

MEMO

To: Ofcom Consumer Panel
cc: XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX
From: Claudio Pollack
Date: 28 May 2007
Ref / Subject: **Quality of Service Review**

Response to Consumer Panel Advice on the Ofcom Review of Quality of Service Initiatives

I would like to thank the Panel for its advice and support for the Topcomm and TopnetUK QoS initiatives.

The latest Consumer Panel research reinforces previous findings by Ofcom: namely that QoS is an important factor in making consumers more active in the telecoms market. Conversely we have found that one of the main drivers of non-participation in the market is the effort involved in making comparisons between different suppliers and not knowing where to find trusted information about the options available. 42% of fixed voice, 44% of mobile and 58% of internet customers would be likely, very likely or certain to consider shopping around if they had access to information comparing customer service levels. Our research has also found that 31% of fixed line, 23% of mobile and 29% of ISP customers would like additional information about quality of service, as compared with 31% of fixed, 18% of mobile and 23% of Internet customers who would like additional information about price.

We welcome the Panel's advice that the scope of QoS information should be expanded to cover broadband and more information in relation to mobile phones. We are considering appropriate metrics. In selecting the candidates for parameters to be included, we have focused on those aspects of the provision and maintenance of a communications service most likely to be of interest to consumers. Initially, the following metrics are possible candidates for our consideration and engagement with stakeholders.

Broadband only

- Average duration between customer-reported faults.
- Broadband actual download vs. potential maximum download speed.

Fixed voice and broadband

- Average time taken (in days) to provide an initial service.
- Early life failures – percentage of new connections encountering a reported fault within the first thirty days.

- Average time taken to repair a service (in hours).

Fixed voice, broadband and mobile

- Percentage of faults that recur within 7 days.
- Average time to resolve a customer complaint (in days).
- Percentage of bills which generate customer enquiries.
- Average time taken to answer a customer's call.
- Percentage of customer enquiries successfully resolved at first point of contact

Once these metrics have been established we will consider how we should best capture consumers' information transparency requirements in relation to NGN, VoIP, data services etc.

We note the Panel's preference for combining price and quality information within one source. We share the Panel's view that in the longer term this would be a desirable outcome for consumers. In the short term, we have recently re-launched the Ofcom price accreditation scheme, which requires those accredited to provide direct links from their sites to Topcomm and Topnetuk. We are also considering the feasibility of allowing the price accredited sites to use the QoS data.

We support the Panel in its desire to promote consumer awareness of the initiatives. We welcome the Panel's decision to include a link from the new OCP website to Topcomm and TopnetUK. We are also considering ways in which Ofcom can take a more proactive role. For example, we might:

- Use the press, commercial sites and intermediaries (eg Citizens Advice, Which?) to raise awareness of the information available.
- Provide more prominent links from the Ofcom site to the price and QoS information and between the price and QoS sites.

We would be delighted to discuss with the Panel further means in which the initiatives could be publicised.

Yours sincerely

Claudio Pollack