

Top Five ISP Customer Complaints And How to Avoid These Issues

- 1. Too few choices** – In some areas there may be only a few providers of high-speed DSL, cable or wireless broadband Internet service, leaving consumers feeling like they have little control or bargaining power when it comes to selecting an Internet service provider. Competition among providers helps to keep prices low and service levels high.
- 2. Installation delay** – Once you've decided on a service provider, nothing is more frustrating than having to wait a long time for installation. It's even worse if the provider promises installation by a certain time and fails to deliver.
- 3. Misleading advertising** – One of the primary complaints is the bait-and-switch tactic that some companies employ. Customers are lured by low introductory rates only to get an unpleasant surprise when the rates jump dramatically after the introductory period ends.
- 4. Hidden fees** – Most complaints about Internet service providers relate to hidden fees, overcharging or not keeping the verbal agreements made by the sales people. Consumers who believe the sales pitch and fail to read the service agreement before signing are often unhappy when their billing statement includes unexpected service or rental fees. Then, customers who want to cancel after finding the service is not what they expected are angry to learn they have to pay a cancellation or disconnect fee.
- 5. Lousy customer service and support** – It is interesting that people are just as likely to recommend a company with which they have had a complaint that was handled quickly, competently and to the customer's satisfaction, as they are to recommend a company with which they have had no complaints. Unfortunately, service after the sale is where many companies fail. There is an almost endless list of customer service complaints, such as; getting stuck in the loop of automated message options and being unable to reach a real person who can help you; getting transferred to multiple service representatives; incompetent, rude or misinformed service representatives; receiving conflicting or wrong information; not having your calls returned; repeated calls to customer service without resolution; and getting a foreign help desk worker whom you can't understand. Add to this list faulty equipment and installation or service technicians who are poorly trained or who don't keep their appointments.

How to Avoid These Issues

- 1. Do your homework** - Before committing to a service provider, talk to other similar businesses about their Internet service provider and customer service experience. Ask for recommendations. Check online reviews and organizations such as the Better Business Bureau to get feedback on companies you are considering. Keep in mind that people are more likely to speak out about a bad experience than to take time talking about good results.
- 2. Plan ahead** - Do you plan to hire more employees, open a branch office, host a website, add VoIP Internet telephone service or utilize offsite "cloud" computing programs? Consider your technology needs for the next few years before making a commitment so that you don't outgrow the service before the end of the contract period.

3. **Get prices and sales agreements in writing** – Demand that the fee schedule and any offered sales incentives be provided to you in writing; verbal agreements are unenforceable. Many providers have a short agreement form that references the “Terms and Conditions” listed on the provider’s website, making it difficult to determine what you’re agreeing to. As tedious as it is, don’t just skim the fine print. Read the entire service agreement carefully, and if you don’t understand the terminology have a technologically-savvy person interpret it for you. This legal document specifies the terms of the contract and it works both ways. Know what you are committing to, as well as what the service provider is obligated to do.

4. **Ask about support** – Before making a commitment, learn everything you can about the company’s customer service and support. Is there a fee for support? Is support available 24/7? Is there a guaranteed response time? Is their support desk local or foreign-based? If something does go wrong, you will be glad you investigated this in advance.