

When you lose your internet service...

I meant to post earlier in the week. However, Verizon “inadvertently” cut my FIOS line—so I had no TV or internet Wednesday into Thursday. Yes, this is a first world problem. Regardless, it had to be resolved, which involved the thing I despise the most in the world: calling Verizon customer service.

And it was just as bad as I feared. First you have to get through a phone tree (I can't stand talking to machines). And then I got disconnected. Then, when I called back, the phone tree was stuck on whether I had power at my location or not. Thanks Verizon, for thinking I am that stupid that I would think that without electricity I would have working TV/internet. On the third try, I went for the Spanish option, from which I was able to finally speak to an agent (whose command of Spanish was not the best as he was versed in Spanglish more than Spanish).

To make a long story short, after more than 24 hours without service and after several calls to support, my FIOS is back on a temporary line that will eventually have to be buried (meaning I am still not done with Verizon).

I work from home, so having internet access is essential for me. Yes, I have a smartphone so I wasn't entirely disconnected from the world wide web, but try proofreading a brochure on your smartphone. Not so easy.

The only positive from this fiasco is that it sparked this blog post. Here's what I learned from losing my internet service:

1. The measure of a company is how it responds to customer problems. Verizon does not do well on this measure. Verizon,

like most companies, is fine *as long as you don't have a problem*. Verizon makes it very hard for customers to talk to customer service agents. It makes customers run around in circles: repeat information, navigate phone trees and so forth. I lost a whole day of service PLUS more than an hour getting someone to help PLUS using data on my phone PLUS having to go somewhere to be able to access the internet to do work PLUS waiting during a three-hour window. If I call to request a credit, I may be compensated for the service loss but not for my time and certainly not for the aggravation. I am sure Verizon is betting that I won't want to lose more time on this, and it may be right. As I said before, I despise calling Verizon's customer service.

2. Monopolies like Verizon have no incentive to be customer-centric and they don't advertise or promote their customer service. If you notice, all FIOS advertising is about what great speeds you will have or any other benefits of having WORKING service. There's no mention of the great customer service that accompanies this "super-fast" internet because there is none.

3. Some companies provide better customer service via social media. Verizon does not. Several years ago this was not true. You could get better, faster service from Twitter since @verizonsupport agents seemed to be more empowered than those on the 1-800 number. Now, if you complain on Twitter, Verizon reps will quickly want to move you over to direct message so that they can give you a link to report your problem. Agents on @verizonsupport seem to have little or no ability to actually help or intervene in your favor, unlike @deltaassist, which has the ability to rebook your flight, etc.

4. The problem is with company policies not with employees. It's been my experience that people want to help, but they are forced to follow company policies and procedures, which are not customer-friendly. The technician that came to my house was far more helpful and on the ball than the agents on the

1-800 line. He was empowered to do what he had to do to fix the problem, whereas the agents in the call center were forced to call other departments and work within constraints.

5. **You must have a “plan b” or “plan c.”** If something fails (you could lose power, or your car is in the shop or any other unexpected problem), you have to find a work around. In this case, my county libraries all offer wi-fi, and have desks with power outlets. That was the way to get some work done for me.

And lastly, on a personal note:

6. **I have to try to stop sweating the small stuff.** I get upset because I expect things to work and work well. And they often don't. Yesterday, I was reminded that our time on earth can be very short and you just don't know how life will turn out, so perhaps worrying about Verizon is a complete waste of time. I had my annual eye doctor appointment, and the usual optometrist was not there. I was shocked and very sorry to learn that she died suddenly after an aggressive illness. She was around my age. She was a very nice person and I always enjoyed chatting with her. The doctor told me she had been very healthy and health-conscious, but this illness came out of nowhere. She was gone in a matter of weeks. Rest in peace Teresa, you are missed.

Enjoy your Labor Day weekend! How did we get to the last weekend of “official” summer so fast? Sigh.