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Mr John Lister  
Area General Manager  
Telstra  
3/10 Holden Place  
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Dear John

Oh how I hate to write!

The material (enclosed) arrived recently. It presumes that we in small business take the time to read all your outpourings, waiting for new episodes with the glee of the morons who watch Big Brother. The reality is that you, and other corporates, have dulled our senses to the degree that we take no notice of you, we don't read your material and even if we did, we don't understand it.

In the real world out here, we are under siege from everyone with a telephone exchange and even if we could understand the New Delhi accents, we can't make head nor tail of their offerings. I stick with Telstra. Why? Are you familiar with the saying 'better to stick with the devil you know'. We don't know who to believe any more John, and we certainly don't understand how you operate or why, every time I relax my guard and accept a Telstra phone marketer's call, they tell me they can lower my charges, or change something to save 5% here or 10% there. Why do you have to annoy me and make big people of yourselves. If you can do these things so easily, why not just slip a surprise into my next phone bill, with a simple explanation for the reduction. Why all the posturing and chest thumping.

You (and other corporates) have spawned a new breed of leech behind a brass plaque of customer service and marketing. My proposition is that these departments are merely self-generating their own pay packets through setting up an amateurish, frustrating and time-consuming block between your customers and the people who should be managing Telstra, and empowered to make decisions on the spot. Today's customer service and marketing people may be big on academic knowledge gained through idealistic US textbooks, but possess few skills and no knowledge whatever of how the world works. They approach marketing and customer service with the zeal of a Utah parson, and they reek of insincerity. I can only assume that your letter was penned by one of these graduates.

If you dispensed with this so-called customer service regime and start making your own decisions as a manager, you would earn more brownie points from business clients and things would happen a lot faster, with a lot less interruption to our working day.

Quite frankly John, we out here in the real world are fed up to the back teeth with telephone providers, including Telstra. You are annoying us to death. You are probably saying by now 'we have never had a complaint about this stuff before'.

You know why? Everyone is bored. We tolerate big business and try to pretend you are not annoying us. I can assure you, everyone in business I talk to feels as I do. I am not alone – you are.

You goaded me into this outburst by your latest marketing blurb which is probably the worst example of bumptious gobbledegook I've ever read. I wonder if you have actually read it?

Let's look at your attached communication.

You have involved me in a "Portfolio Management Program". Perhaps I don't want to be involved. Shouldn't you ask me for my permission first? That's after you explain what it is.

"..in order to provided (your mistake) value to your business." - Telstra has never provided value to my business. I need a phone, you've got one and I hire it, at whatever price you demand. What is this 'value'?

"...continual improvement in customer service over the past 5 years" – in light of the national reports of Telstra standards, this has got to be tongue in cheek. Until Sol made his recent announcement, we thought we were going to be stuck with the worst, slowest, most accident prone and expensive telecommunications hardware network in the world.

I didn't know a Gap Communications person managed my account. In fact, I didn't know anyone managed my account. I bought a mobile from them once. Your system of representatives is impossible for mere mortals to figure out. We don't know who belongs to what. I don't even know who Gap Communications is or where they fit into the scheme of things. And I don't really care.

Every time a dedicated staff member is assigned to me (my bank did it recently and what a debacle that turned out to be), they disappear within a couple of months and the whole program starts again, wasting even more of my time and I suspect more of our money.

What's there to manage with my piddly little account, that it warrants an Australia Fair-Southport person to "commence management".

You go to great pains to outline the advantages of this program. I don't see one single thing there that I would need. It's all stuff to make you feel good...like you are trying to justify your existence. None of what you have outlined says anything or makes a modicum of sense.

And as for "...we may ask your Portfolio Manager to assist us in informing you of marketing campaigns and promotions which may be relevant to your telecommunications needs." What, in God's name does that mean, John? Do you know? Is this the way Sol talks. I've found him to be a pretty straight shooter so far, who is at least understandable. I am sure he would be horrified at the outpourings of his regional outposts.

And it goes on "in order to do this we will make available the account and service information necessary for them to manage your account using Telstra's 'My Call Review' program." I'm supposed to know what your "My Call Review" program is?

John, if you don't see the futility of all this pompous balderdash, I doubt if you ever will. I have been in the communications and PR game for a lifetime, and I can tell you that if I wrote this kind of crap and produced it to a client, they'd throw me out the door while ripping up my last invoice.

In short, your letter says nothing. It's not understandable by anyone who doesn't speak 'Telstra-speak'. I can only assume it's just a new ruse for your sales automatons to annoy me.

All I want is a phone, a couple of extra connection devices and a bill once a month. If you see a way of improving your service or lowering my bills, just do it.

Until you have something really worthwhile to say, save your postage as well and credit that against my account.

And fire your marketing and customer service departments. They are doing you no favours.

Are you interested in my true reason for this outburst? As I go about my business, I see, daily, a culture of waste in big companies. Our business bills (not just yours) are high because you waste countless dollars playing with marketing strategies which you hope will make you more money, at the expense of looking after your existing customers.

Yours not all that sincerely

**Ken Newton**  
**Managing Director**

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