

Broadband Customers Fork Out GBP6 Million Calling For Help



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Industry: [Telecommunications](#)

2009 has been another flourishing year for the [broadband](#) industry, with consumers spending a whopping GBP2.6 billion on their service. And yet a survey of over 12,000 customers reveals that all is not well in broadband-land when it comes to getting help when things go wrong. Only 1 in 2 broadband customers (55%) are satisfied with the technical support offered by their broadband company and nearly GBP6 million a year is spent calling technical helplines.

In fact, a staggering 16 million calls are made to technical support lines every year, with calls lasting an average of 17 minutes. However, while a number of broadband firms now offer free calls to technical support, at least 1 in 3 customers (36%) still face charges of up to 10p per minute, on top of a 9p call set-up fee, costing up to GBP1.75 for the average phone call.

According to the uSwitch.com survey, nearly six million broadband customers have called for technical help over the last year, with network connection problems cited as the most common complaint - when a broadband service fails to work or is frequently cut off.

General service interruptions are a common complaint for over one million customers, and a further million have reported problems with their wireless router. Customers usually have to call technical helplines at least twice to fix the same problem - just 4 out of 10 customers (41%) have successfully resolved a problem in just one call.

Table 1

Main reasons for calling technical support

1. Network connection problems (37%)
2. Service interruptions (18%)
3. Wireless router problems (17%)
4. Set-up problems (8%)

5. Issues with speed (6%)
6. Other / don't know (14%)

Source: uswitch.com

Shockingly, customers spend over a third of their time on the phone waiting to be put through to an advisor. On the average 17 minute call customers report being left waiting on hold for six minutes. There are significant differences in call wait times between the broadband companies: O2, which came top for technical support in the survey with 75% satisfied, keeps customers waiting an average of two minutes to speak to an advisor, while TalkTalk, with 56% satisfied, keeps customers waiting an average of 12 minutes. Orange and Tiscali customers were the least satisfied with technical support with scores of 42% and 47% respectively.

Jason Glynn, communications expert at www.uSwitch.com, comments: "As with any new technology, when broadband was first set up in people's homes there were teething problems. The good news is that many of these have been ironed out: two years ago set-up issues caused 16% of complaints, but this figure has now halved. Even better news is that a number of firms have dropped their charges for calling technical helplines. Some phone companies now include calls to non-geographic numbers as part of their call packages, so broadband customers still faced with calling a premium rate number for technical support could well see their costs go down if they moved onto an inclusive calling plan.

"Nevertheless it is still disheartening to see some companies continue to charge customers for technical support. In such a competitive arena it's surprising that they haven't wised up to the fact that customers expect more from their broadband service than a cheap deal. They want a service they can rely on - and when things go wrong they need assurance that their service will be back up and running again as quickly as possible and at minimum expense. If they are not happy they will simply switch away."

[See the full version of this press release.](#)"

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