

## Network poaching - when will it stop

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It's a sad fact that networks as big as they are worldwide, feel the need to do unethical things. The big bug bear by many dealers is the Networks poaching their customers. What drives this insane ambition to upset the dealer and the customer, what reason do networks have for wanting to try to destroy or at least make less profitable their own dealers who are working hard?.

There have been many stories where the networks poach customers, and many times when the customer is even in the shop facing the dealer. One dealer had a customer in store and contacted the network to make a manual connection, as usual the network, like all networks used the standard feeble excuse of "We need to talk to the customer to ask some security questions" Rubbish, dealers know full well that this is the beginning of the end, the customer talks to the network, who then offer a better deal and handset on the spot. It's not the customers fault, faced with a better deal the customer is going to reluctantly say yes to the network.

But how embarrassing for the customer who is stood facing the dealer then has to explain they cannot go ahead with his deal. Just why do networks do this? The dealer cannot match networks offers if he did all his margin would be eaten up.

We have seen this ourselves, with networks offering £9 plans on a 12 month contract and a high end handset to boot. But what is the point, the network is cutting its profit by offering a short cheap plan and high cost handset, where is the sense in losing money, when the dealer has already done the hard work and got the customer signed to come onto the network?

It also makes dealers feel that the networks do not care about their business despite all the protestations of support for dealers, how can this be supporting dealers when they take the bread out of their children's mouths, by nicking the dealers customer.

All network have their own websites, shops, and spend millions on advertising, they even boast of increased customer acquisition, so why the need to steal dealers customers?

The networks should be working with dealers to have them connect more customers to their network, but is it any wonder that dealers will start churning customers over to a different network, as soon as they hear those words "We need to speak to the customer"?

Every dealer knows that the process of a customer from CV2/AVS check to network check, customers will show as being accepted, so why do networks insist on talking to the customer at the point of sale?

It is always the customer contact centre that is the culprit in all this, the customer contact centre should get on doing its own job of helping customers with problems etc not acting as surrogate sales people.

The IMPDA believes in fairness across the board, and we call on all networks to stop this unethical practice. This is unfair on the dealer, the customer, and the industry in general, and this is another of those practices like bad cash back that needs to be stamped out.

The networks give dealers targets to meet each month, but how can they meet targets if they are poaching the sale and customer from the dealer, it makes no sense at all. Dealers have to eat and keep their business running like everyone else, the dealer does not have £millions of pounds in profits each year, they don't have worldwide sales, so lets make a change for 2010, Networks make a pledge just for once to stop poaching your own dealers customers and make this the year of co-operation with dealers.

If you have a story on poaching, please email admin (@) impda.co.uk