

Salisbury Consumer's Guide: Buying Internet, TV, and Phone

www.anti-fibrant.com

How to Get the TV, Internet, and Phone Service You Want

Be prepared to protect your consumer's rights.

You will need to act assertively on your own behalf to get the best prices and services for your money from a broadband provider. Be prepared to negotiate your price with anyone selling internet, TV, and phone. If you are not willing to stand up for your consumer rights then the provider will take advantage of you, whether it's by Fibrant, Time Warner, AT&T, Windstream, Dish or DirecTV. These businesses want to make money. Some will act coldly disinterested at first when you attempt to advance your cause.

A municipal enterprise, like Fibrant, is every bit as money-hungry as the cables if not more so. Fibrant, because of poor management and rigidity, has set its prices in stone and will not bargain or negotiate with a customer. This is one of Fibrant's many downfalls. Time Warner and AT&T will bargain and negotiate with you when you state you are leaving. They are intelligently run businesses, unlike the city's fiber optic



network. If you are renegotiating your prices and services, you will start off by telling them you are going to switch to another provider with better deals. Be prepared to name those other providers and their deals. Have their offers and prices ready so Time Warner Cable or AT&T will be able to top them. Get a better price than what you are paying and get a superior package. None of the incumbent providers want to hear you are leaving. In rare instances you will have will have talk to higher level supervisors or even talk to the Vice President of Customer Care to get the best deals. Time Warner and AT&T acknowledge the business maxim, "A customer at a lower price is far better than no customer at all." This is your ticket to the Consumer Wins derby.

Practice consumer assertiveness. Always. It will save you hundreds if not thousands of dollars per year and get you the best services.

VOIP Phones?

Time Warner, Vonage, and Google Voice all undersell Fibrant and provide outstanding Voice Over the Internet Phone service. Magic Jack is likely the best deal of all. Pay only \$39 for the entire first year for your Magic Jack, and a \$1.90 a month for each year after that (19.95 a year).

If you have had the misfortune to get stung by Fibrant and are having trouble getting them to fix outages, set top boxes, and the like, call your City Councilman and complain.

Perhaps he or she can bring it to Fibrant's attention. If you were duped into Fibrant, you may wish to discuss Fibrant's "fill in the blank's" legality of their \$360 iron-fisted contract (that they call the installation fee) with your lawyer. We understand the contracts poor construction violates North Carolina law.

a review of assertive action

- Tell your current provider you are willing to leave unless they give you what you want. Keep in mind they need to make money--most don't want to lose customers. Research the available packages from other providers and current specials, and ask for exactly what you want. This gives you a powerful advantage. When we say most, we are not including Fibrant with their rigid anti-consumer and non-competitive business model. The cables are old hands at competition. They want to win your consumer dollar, even if it means backing off and trying to satisfy you.
- Every so often a case-hardened customer rep will not follow their company protocol for giving someone "wanting to leave" what they want. Ask to speak to a supervisor or politely excuse yourself and call later. Don't speak to the rep trying to draw a line in the sand. Be prepared to talk to supervisors, managers, and vice presidents in charge of customer care. The higher-ups can make things happen for you. Be polite, but above all know they want your money. That gives you the consumer power. Only someone self-defeating will fight your requests. Fibrant does not bargain or negotiate with their customers. It's a take-it-or-leave-it deal. This is one of the many reasons why Fibrant is failing badly and is over 70 million dollars in debt and draining off our city's reserves for many millions more of our dollars.
- If the company won't negotiate a reasonable price, then pull the plug on their services and move to the next provider until you get what you want. You are important and you want what's best for you. You want the most bang for your buck.
- If you know you are unassertive and have poor negotiation skills, know this: If you state you want to turn off services and do arrange the turn-off, often within a few days you will get a call from Time Warner Cable and AT&T making you offers you can't refuse. You are in the driver's seat. You can have an assertive friend, neighbor, or relative handle your dealings with the cables. TWC and AT&T do not want to lose a customer. Smart business.
- We support anyone who gives the best prices and services. At the moment the cables do. Through poor management, Fibrant is a non-competitor.
- To find great deals on internet, TV, or phones, examine bargain deals arriving through the mail or on the internet. For high-speed internet, know you will likely need download speeds between 10 Mbps and 20 mbps. Both Time Warner Cable and AT&T supply that. Time Warner currently is the leading local internet provider and has the cheapest deal prices. If you are already a customer, they will bring your prices down if you tell them you are going elsewhere.
- Time Warner Cable has excellent deals on their TV, as do DirecTV and Dish. TWC currently offers free HD, Start Over, and over 200 digital channels in their budget \$99 Triple Play and Two-fer deals. Remember the quality of their picture is every bit as good as Fibrant while offering 1080P HD at much lower rates. Fibrant suffers from frozen pictures and pixilation.

