Roaming in Copacabana

I walked into a Rogers Wireless store the other day as a customer, and was blown away by the honesty of one sales clerk. To do that, he said one word: “Revenue.”

Let me back up. I had just returned from a holiday in Brazil, where I had brought my Blackberry so I could stay in contact with family and friends in a cheaper fashion than with a cell phone or with a hotel’s exorbitant telephone service chargers. Which is why I didn’t shut down my e-mail accounts before I went.

When I came back, I got a bill from Rogers, covering the data charges I inured over about half of the time I spent in Rio (I’ll get a bill for the other half after). The damages: 5,151 bytes — about $5 per megabyte.

I’ve learned my lesson: Don’t incur roaming charges. Don’t stay in touch. Forget productivity. Forget the convenience promised by modern technology. Don’t even think of working while abroad. Just suffer, and let your company, family and friends suffer. Rogers’ shareholders of course are really interested in efficiencies as they say they are, why aren’t they complaining?

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The damages: 5,151 bytes, about $5 per megabyte. — for a total of $241.11. I expect what I can expect in terms of weather and what the currency exchange rate is.

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Talk about honesty.

So Rogers won’t keep a running tally of my roaming data charges because it can’t make a decision not to tell me if I knew, I might cut back on my use of e-mail or using that neat WorldMate Live application that tells me if my flight is on time, so what can I expect in terms of weather and what the currency exchange rate is.

I was hit with the bill simultaneously with Rogers’ news that it would be releasing the Apple iPhone some time later this year, which is relevant because the iPhone is a notoriously heavy user of data traffic. Catherine McKinnon’s story in the Globe and Mail pointedly mentioned that Rogers was looking at the iPhone as its “next money maker” and that users will probably have to pay a minimum of $65 a month for the iPhone instead of the $72.39 average for other cellphones. And that’s just in Canada — if you’re a real glutton for punishment or have money to burn, get an iPhone and schlep it with you when you travel.

Unless of course you don’t care because your company is picking up your roaming tab and not complaining about it. And that brings up yet another question: If corporations are really interested in efficiencies as they say they are, why aren’t they complaining?

“Speculation about the delay [in releasing the iPhone] includes the possibility that Apple is looking for a better deal, that Rogers may be less than keen on changing its data rate plans as other carriers have,” McKinnon wrote. She went on to note that Rogers “reported that monthly bills for cellphone subscribers on contracts jumped $4.75 to $77.34 due to greater data service demand.”

Well, I’m happy for Rogers’ shareholders. But I can’t say I’m a very happy customer.

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Jack Kapica has been writing on technology for the past 15 years for The Globe and Mail, and has been working exclusively for the on-line Globe since 2001. In his Cyberia blog, he writes news, makes comments, looks at rumours, and offers opinions on culture and developments in technology.
The clerk appeared to have deleted and reconnected by accident because they were budget. As a CPP, I can't afford these wild fluctuations. I want some cost certainty so I can cut back. I tried at their local store. The same story as well as two operas arriving at the right person who told me "That is what you pay" and pay up. I disconnected my phone for two months in protest --- really only hurting myself unfortunately. After living in the US for years I think back of my $9.50/month plan with Mexico included with free roaming. Let's hope the Ballsen get open instead of just our wallets $9.50.

I went corporate to all the 1 800 wait for me music and learned all the top 10 songs as well as two operas and the History Channel which I have enjoyed. We should have a Rogers Roaming challenge for next time you travel it could be an option for you. 10 Rogers stores --- well they have the same on the front but thank god they don't sell food as we would all die if we had to wait there for compensation. I went corporate to the $ 60 wait for me music and learned all the top 10 songs as well as two operas and the History Channel which I have enjoyed.

I am experiencing a similar problem with Rogers. I have Internet, cable and phone service. The Toronto Community Housing Company terminated a contract, January 1, 2008, with Rogers to include basic cable in the rent. That was $23.50. My January bill, with the $23.50 added seemed reasonable. But, over the next three months (I've seen bills of $35, $41, $44) and $106. I made no changes to the services up to just recently. I cut back from Hi-Speed Extreme to Lite when advised of the new throttling deal. I'm not into "Ka Ching" as soon as International Roaming Rates rears its golden mane. Get your protests --- really only hurting myself unfortunately. After living in the US for years I think back of my $9.50/month plan with Mexico included with free roaming. Let's hope the Ballsen get open instead of just our wallets $9.50.