

Buyer Beware

Liberalisation and competition brings many benefits; lower prices, better customer service, a wider range of services, more choices for the consumer. However, more choice makes it more difficult for the individual to decide what is best for them. No one can tell you which is the “best buy” for you. It depends upon how you use your phone.

Selecting a mobile telephone plan results in a significant financial commitment. Make your decision with the same care as you would take for any major consumer purchase. Carefully read all forms and promotional material – including all of the small print – before signing up for telephone services.

Companies compete for your telephone business. Use your buying power wisely and shop around. If you do not understand their marketing material or contracts, ask the company to explain. If you think the material, or the answers you get, are incorrect or misleading, tell the ICT Authority.



For more information, go to the Authority's web site at www.icta.ky or, for domain name registrations, to www.nic.ky



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Selecting a Mobile Phone Service



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Selecting a Mobile Phone Service

What options are available?

There are three main ways to pay for mobile phone service. Most companies offer a choice of plans within each of these categories, so you can select the one that best suits your needs.

Monthly Contract (“Postpaid” Service)

- ◆ You receive a monthly bill that includes a monthly fee, dependent on the plan you choose. There are additional charges for all calls that are not covered by the allowance of call minutes included in your plan. Be aware that these “bundled” minutes may not cover calls to another company’s subscribers (“off-net” calls), international calls, or calls to other premium services. In Cayman, no company is currently allowing you to “roll-over” unused minutes from one month to the next. You therefore lose any unused minutes at the end of each month.
- ◆ Typically, there is a minimum initial contract period of at least twelve months. If you cancel your service within the contract period there is usually an early termination fee. Make sure you understand, before signing the contract, how the termination fee works and the amount.
- ◆ There is generally a wider choice of services and handsets than for other plans such as prepaid.
- ◆ Call charges and handsets are generally cheaper.
- ◆ Additional services such as voicemail and a number of text messages may be included in your monthly subscription and not charged separately.

“Pay as you Go” (“Prepaid” Service)

- ◆ You pay before making calls, for example with a phone card or credit/debit card.
- ◆ Unlike a monthly contract, there are no credit checks or minimum contract period.
- ◆ There is usually a more limited choice of services and handsets.
- ◆ It is easy to control spending, but you will not get an itemised bill.
- ◆ Handsets and call charges tend to be more expensive than with a monthly contract.
- ◆ Minutes that you buy in advance may have a maximum “life”. If you don’t use them within a specified period, you may lose the unused minutes.
- ◆ Under some plans, companies may deduct a small fee each month if there is a credit balance on your account.

“No Line Rental”

- ◆ Some companies provide a service that is a cross between their Prepaid and Postpaid Services.
- ◆ You pay only a small monthly charge.
- ◆ This charge does not include any “bundled” call minutes, and call rates are similar to those charged to Prepaid customers.
- ◆ You are billed monthly, so you can see where your money is going.
- ◆ You avoid the inconvenience of having to “recharge” your account.
- ◆ The price and range of handsets is similar to Postpaid Service.

What are the most important things to think about?

The key thing to consider is how you expect to use your mobile phone:

- ◆ How many calls will you generally make in a

month?

- ◆ What time of day will you make most of your calls?
- ◆ Which mobile network is used by most of the people you are likely to call?
- ◆ What kind of extra services do you want (e.g. mobile Internet services, voicemail, etc.)?
- ◆ Will you use your phone whilst abroad and, if so, in which countries?
- ◆ Which company provides the quality of service and customer support that you need?

Reading the small print

Be wary of making comparisons using the ***Effective Rates*** quoted by the various companies. The Effectives Rates they quote apply only if you use exactly the number of call minutes that are included with each plan. If you use more or less than this number of minutes, ***your*** effective rate may be much higher.

If many of your calls are international, to subscribers of another network, or to other premium services, make sure that you find out the costs for these. It is unlikely that they will be covered by the minutes included with your monthly subscription.

Check the cost of additional services that you may wish to use such as voicemail, text messaging and data services.

Is a deposit required, and if so how much?

Do you have to pay a penalty if you subsequently wish to change your plan, or move to a different supplier?

Additionally, you might want to think about how much it will cost others to call you, whether they are your friends, family (especially if you pay their bill) or customers. Whether they are calling from a fixed line or a mobile phone, what *they* pay may depend on *your* choice of mobile network.

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