



**THE SHARP END**  
Jez Harris

### Anti-competitive behaviour

Another dealer recently forwarded me copies of correspondence he had with Ofcom with regards to alleged restrictive practice by networks. This particular complaint was against Orange and the fact the iPhone is only available via network direct routes, along with a couple of big-name high street retailers. But the general complaint covers all the networks and their restrictive practices.

The response from Ofcom was: "Mobile telephone operators are free to introduce exclusive distribution arrangements and negotiate commercial arrangements with manufacturers and suppliers, subject to ensuring any such agreements are compliant with relevant EC and UK competition law provisions. Ofcom has not investigated and is not currently investigating the particular issue you have raised... It remains open for you to provide evidence of a possible competition law infringement directly to Ofcom."

Reading the article, and admittedly I am no legal expert, but it begs the question of whether the networks' actions are legal.

The letter mentions there is a free "probono" service available for individuals or businesses that believe their rights under competition law may be infringed. At the end of the day the consumer's choice is being restricted by the actions of the networks, and ultimately instances of these actions over sustained periods are putting many people out of business.

If Mercedes was to introduce a new flagship motor and turn to its Mercedes dealerships and tell them it will only sell the car direct and won't allow them to sell it themselves, there would be an outcry. What's happening in our industry is no different. And it's killing us. I reckon a lot of smaller dealers are just hanging on until the New Year to call it a day.

### Capacitive screens and bikers

For my sins, one of my favourite pastimes apart from gadgets is motor biking. I'm a fairly new recruit to the general biking scene, having only been interested in riding for the last two years. I'm not a fanatic by any means; I don't pretend to know one model of bike from the next. I have my bike and I like riding it, simple.

I have quite a decent intercom set up for communicating to passengers, bike-to-bike or hands free calling from a mobile phone as well as listening to music whilst riding. One big problem with my bike system and my mobile phone as a biker is the fact handsets with capacitive screens rather than

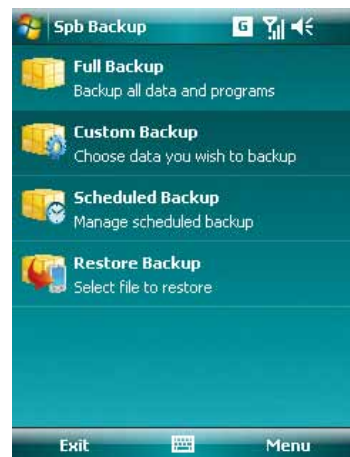
resistive screens are impossible to use whilst wearing gloves. Not the world's most pressing problem, I admit, but when you're getting ready to set out on a ride and you connect your phone up to the intercom/music system having to remove your gloves just to start the music off is a bit of a pain.

I decided to look into the problem a little further a few days ago and I'm not alone in my glove/screen problem. It would seem that with the colder weather creeping up on us that many people also cannot use their phones (mainly iPhones) whilst wearing gloves.

You can purchase a capacitive stylus that will work with capacitive screens but that means something else you have to carry around. And trying to get a stylus out of your pocket with gloves in is in itself no easy task. Another option is to purchase special gloves that will work with these screens but these can be expensive and the design is not too everyone's taste.

The best option I have seen around can be done for just a few pennies and will work with your existing gloves of choice. The remedy is to stitch a few loops of conductive thread into the tip of a glove finger and, hey presto, you can start using your capacitive screen mobile again no problems.

### SPB Backup 2.2



Software company, which primarily makes software for Windows Mobile devices, has at long last updated its very clever and successful SPB Backup to finally support Windows Phone 6.5. Before it only supported up to Windows Mobile 6.1.

With SPB Backup, a user can, as the name suggests, back up everything on their phone in case of emergency. The backups can be done manually or scheduled automatically. Backups can be full or incremental.

SPB Backup is particularly useful for restoring backups after software failure or, more commonly, after a software update has wiped a phone clean. With all the complexities of phones nowadays, software updates are happening more and more frequently and without backup tools such as SPB Backup doing such software updates could lead to the loss of user data. I used to use SPB Backup years ago on my Windows Mobile devices and it was invaluable then.

This update is long overdue.

**Jez Harris founded the online Phone Dealer Forum. Email jez@phoneddealerforum.co.uk**

# Wish takes £100k deal off Azzurri

By Michael Garwood

Wish Communications last week signed national building equipment company Hydrex from O2 dealer Azzurri in a deal worth more than £100,000.

Northamptonshire-based B2B dealer Wish agreed a two year deal with Hydrex last week, which will see all its 440 connections on O2, originally signed through Azzurri, churned on to the Vodafone network through distributor Yes Telecom.

Wish claims the deal with Hydrex, which sells and hires industrial building equipment in the UK, was won predominantly on its Vodafone voice offering, but did also include 100 BlackBerrys



Hallam - O2 steal for Voda

and 40 data card connections.

The deal over two years will be worth more than £100,000 to Wish.

Wish Communications group managing director Mike Hallam said: "It was a nice deal to get before Christmas. It is predominantly a voice contract and around 30 per cent data converged.

"It's decent account with some good volume and good spend so a very good customer to get.

"Over the two years, it will be worth around £100,000 to us, but the biggest thing is winning the business from O2, and the second part is the potential to re new it, and that's when things get very profitable."

## Next signs up Romex

Mobile applications provider Romex has signed a distribution agreement with Next Systems to supply its employee management solutions.

Next is a preferred supplier to BT Engage IT, BT Retail and BT Mobile. The Romex services are voice recording software and systems, data and cabling installation and maintenance, employee management solutions and VoIP and fixed services.

Romex is now working with 50 reseller brands. Next is its first distributor selling its products through its own channel including the sales team at BT Engage IT, BT Retail and BT Mobile. Romex sales director Jason Laight said: "Next holds preferential supplier status with BT, which gives us opportunity."

## Buymobilephones hits record sales

Online retailer BuyMobilePhones.net has increased its staff count and floor space by 50 per cent after hitting a record number of retail sales last month.

Retail sales from the Derbyshire-based retailer hit £4 million last month for the first time, nearly double its sales during the same period a year ago. It said that December is also heading for a record, already equalling 2008 totals mid-month.

To cater for the increase in sales, the company has increased its staff count from 40 to 60 and expanded its floor space by 50 per cent by moving its customer services into a building next door.

BuyMobilePhones.net managing director Paul Sisson said: "We've built up momentum over the year. There are good deals on our website and our product range has increased considerably.

"Last year sales started to trail

off around December 2 but that doesn't seem to be happening this time. Last Monday (December 7) was our busiest ever day and we're expecting this great momentum to carry on into 2010."



Sisson - Christmas rush

## Get Connected to open four more



Wales and West Country independent retailer Get Connected is confident it will have 68 stores opened by the end of the year, just one store off the target of 70 it set itself early 2009.

The retailer opened a new store in Bridgnorth last Friday (December 11) and expects to open another store in Cardiff shortly, and also new outlets in Newport

and Oswestry.

Get Connected boss Damian Cole said: "We'll definitely have 68 stores open by the end of the year and 69 if the shop in Newport can be finished in time. I'm signing a couple of leases on shops this week so we're continuing our momentum into 2010 after what has been a satisfactory 2009."

## SL3 cracker expands

Stoke-based Mobile Phone Solutions has opened six service centres in the UK to cope with increased demand of unlocking Nokia handsets with the SL3 security update.

The company, which unveiled the DM3BOX last May as the first direct Nokia BB5 unlocking solution, has opened four service points in London (Fones Clinic, Harry's, GSM-Mart and Extra Mobile), two in Birmingham (RA Trading and R3 GSM) and one in Manchester (Smart Fones Manchester).

The company began unlocking SL3 models including the N97 and 6303 in August. New models supported include the N97 and N97 Mini, 6303 and 5130. Models Nokia released with new SL3 software are also supported.