

To whom it may concern:

I am a consumer who is blind and recently received an upgrade to my wireless phone through the Verizon Corporation. The product brand is the Samsung Haven which is being touted as totally accessible to consumers who require speech output as a means of controlling and retrieving information from this phone. Though the speech is installed, the following features must be turned on to receive audible service:

1. Menu read out
2. Digit read out
3. Alert read out
4. Flip open and talk
5. Text message read out
6. Full read out

I communicated this information verbally and in writing to the Verizon staff person waiting on me at the time. The person was totally unaware that the Samsung phone contained a speech software and that these features were available. However, after some probing and researching the manual, the attendant managed to access the speech. He demonstrated the use of speech with sever of the menu choices and referred me to "611 (toll free help)" for any additional assistance I needed in learning the features of the phone.

When I arrived home, I discovered that none of the audible features had been activated. I opened my phone, but I had no sound; nor was it obvious to me how to initialize the speech feature. After a period of trial and error, I happened upon audible output, but the phone's functionality was limited. It performed none of the capabilities listed above. I referred to an online MP3 tutorial and spoke with two Verizon customer service experts by phone. Still, I had no success. It was only after comparing my phone with another consumer who has the same mobile phone and the same requirements, that I discovered my phone was not set up correctly during my initial visit and another trip to the Verizon store was a must. Needless to say, the experience of this ordeal left me unnerved and frustrated.

Verizon's customer service efforts failed on several levels:

1. Not a single individual on Verizon's staff had awareness or knowledge regarding the accessibility of the Samsung Haven phone.
2. The Samsung Phone was not fully tested for use of the accessibility features prior to my leaving the Verizon store during my initial visit.
3. Though I was able establish partial speech after speaking with a Verizon representative by phone,

the phone clearly did not allow me to independently activate its full read out capability for all menus.

Although I am now pleased with the performance of this phone and feel that it meets my accessibility expectation at the moment, the customer service I received in arriving at this point did not live up to the quality care I, as a consumer, expect when procuring a product. I would certainly hope that Verizon will make a drastic improvement in the service it provides to future customers by training its staff more thoroughly on its product line and and by researching a product that is totally accessible to persons with disabilities out-of-the-box. The features contained on this phone are not cutting-edge, nor are they as extensive as other products currently on the market, therefore, I would expect that a major corporation in the telecommunications industry could make a better effort in serving its customers with disabilities.

Darryl Eaton