

I have been a Verizon Wireless customer for over ten years, and, basically, I have found their service to be pretty good, and their customer service and tech support, to be pretty helpful as well. However, that has unfortunately changed recently. In the past, Verizon offered several phones that were reasonably blind-friendly, and their tech support were more than capable of talking me through anything that I needed to know and to use for making and receiving calls.

This past August, I was eligible for another upgrade, and I decided to get an Ozone phone, made by HTC; the phone was supposed to have Talks installed in it. Then the phone arrived on Friday the 13th, I was able to activate it, although the talking program wasn't working quite properly. That night, I went to the Verizon store in Manhattan on Broadway near Union Square, but they weren't able to get it to work properly either. I decided to take the phone with me to where I was moving in Port Jefferson Station, NY, out in Long Island. When I called Verizon, they agreed to ship me a replacement phone with the correctly installed Talks program. They sent THREE phones, but none of them had it installed. Finally, when the third one arrived, they agreed to re-imburse me the round-trip cab fare to go to their store. I spent almost three hours there, because the technician had difficulty, first in downloading the program, and then in installing it on the phone. Even then, he couldn't get me anything more than a demo version because the company (Nuance, from India) was not reachable, other than by email. The technician said that someone from Verizon would call me the next day to give me the license information, and to help me enter it and get the program activated. When nobody called me by the middle of the afternoon, I called Verizon, and they informed me that they still had not heard back from Nuance. They finally agreed to send me a brand new phone, with the program installed on it. They admitted that the replacement phones never came with the program installed on them, and that I would either have to go to one of their stores to have it installed, or I would have to download it from my computer, and then install it; however I would need someone sighted with me to help me install it on the phone-not very practical when I was alone. The next phone that they sent me was missing that program. A very nice and helpful person from Verizon Wireless' tech department, named Ross, spent almost 4hr trying to help me get that phone to work; he said that he would call back when my brother was over, and then I told him that all of our efforts had been wasted, since the program wasn't even on that phone. He then got his supervisor to send me yet another phone, and finally this one did have the program correctly installed on it. Ross did follow up and call me to help me set it up and get it activated. In talking with Ross, and various other people in the tech department, I have discovered that, at present, the HTC Ozone is the only phone that Verizon has with any assistive technology for blind people on it, and at that, the company (Nuance) doesn't offer live tech support, either for the customers, or for the Verizon technicians, should they have a question about Talks. HTC no longer supports Talks, since that phone is also a discontinued model now. Even with this talking software, I have been told that Talks does not work very well when surfing the net; I can attest to that first-hand. I find myself in a position where I'm paying for a service that I really can't use on my own, but I still need the program for doing some of the other things with the phone, such as sending text messages, and being able to read them. This whole problem that started on August 13th of this year just got resolved about 10da ago, a little less

than 2mo from when it started.