

**STATE OF NEW YORK
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

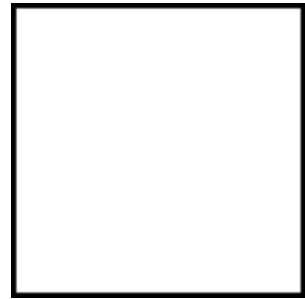
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Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to)
Consider the Adequacy of Verizon) **Case 16-C-0122**
New York Inc.'s Retail Service Quality)
Processes and Programs)
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Testimony of Herb Kushner

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1 **What is your name?**

2 My name is Herb Kushner.

3

4 **When did you start at Verizon (or its predecessor companies) and when did you retire?**

5 I started in 1991 and I retired in February 2015. I worked for 24 years as field technician in
6 the construction department. I was a cable splicer in Manhattan for my entire tenure at
7 Verizon and its predecessor companies.

8

9 **What work did you do and in what area?**

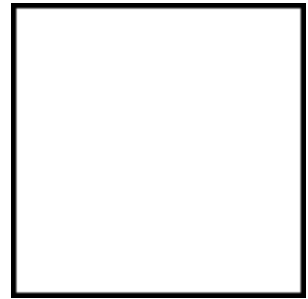
10 I did telephone construction and cable repair all over Manhattan. In my 24 years I did
11 many section throws. I rehabbed entire blocks as part of PSC mandates. I was often the guy
12 they sent to do a job when others couldn't do it. In 1998 I was asked to work as an
13 engineer, using my expertise to design Outside Plant jobs that needed to be done. I
14 stopped in 2000, not wanting to move permanently into management.

15

16 On Sept 11, 2001 I was loaned out to repair. When they needed a splicer to lead a team of
17 Installation and Repair technicians to provision the Police Academy, which became the
18 Temporary Office of Emergency Management, they asked me. I knew my job very well.

19

20 **How did service quality change over the years you were at Verizon?**



1 Twenty years ago the quality and accuracy of our work was
2 stressed above all else. The parameters by which craft and
3 management are now evaluated relate only to speed. Management no longer stresses any
4 parameters at all that measure quality.

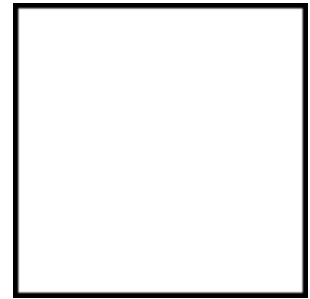
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6 Back in the early to mid-90s there were PSC mandated rehabs. The outside plant in these
7 particular blocks was so bad that the PSC mandated that the company correct it. The
8 company would identify the worst blocks in various districts and they would send us in for
9 3-6 months to do a total rehab. We'd change every cable, every terminal, every cross-box
10 and every bridle wire. In most cases we'd change the entrance cable as well, and we'd
11 typically increase the size of the entrance cable. We did a complete rehab of everything we
12 could reach, right up to the customer's point of entry. Everything had to be just so. When
13 we finished, the report rate would drop to 0 and it would stay there for years.

14

15 At the conclusion of each job, there was an inspection. Your first line manager, your second
16 line manager, a quality control guy from the company and a representative from the PSC
17 would come and inspect the job. We would do a walk-through of the entire block. Anything
18 less than perfect would be noted and you would have to make corrections. They were
19 serious about how the plant looked and how it functioned.

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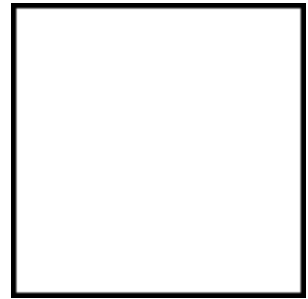


1 By the late 90's the rehabs stopped. The company had us do
2 ONLY what was absolutely necessary. For instance, if a building
3 was coming down, and it contained the cross box for the block, we'd relocate the cross box.
4 Everything became piecemeal; one little "Band Aid" at a time. The plant degenerated to
5 the point where it looked horrible and functioned even worse. I was loaned out to repair in
6 2nd Avenue. There was a seminary all the way down on the Lower East Side whose phone
7 line was going out repeatedly. They kept calling for repair and technician after technician
8 showed up and changed pairs with no good result. I was sent there, and I had no choice but
9 to take their service off one bad line that wouldn't work and put it on another line that I
10 knew wouldn't work; as did all the techs that went before me. I remember the Mother
11 Superior asking me, 'What can we do to get them to fix this?' The easy answer was to say,
12 "Call repair." But I couldn't lie to her. I knew the company was never going to actually fix
13 their phone lines. This customer was on the periphery of the district, in a low priority area. I
14 told her, 'It embarrasses me to tell you this, but the only thing you can do if you want
15 reliable telephone service is to call the cable company. They'll be out here in a few days
16 and your phone troubles will be over.

17

18 **What do you know about air pressure maintenance?**

19 There is a department called "pressure" that installs equipment to force compressed air
20 into cables in order to keep water out. In the mid-nineties the company beefed up the



1 pressure department and expanded it. That investment resulted
2 in a tremendous drop in the number of cable failures and an
3 equally large drop in service disruptions. Ten or so years ago Verizon shrunk the pressure
4 department and stopped maintaining the system. They had something that was proven to
5 work well, but they weren't forced to maintain it, so they didn't. As a result customers now
6 go out of service, often for months at a time.

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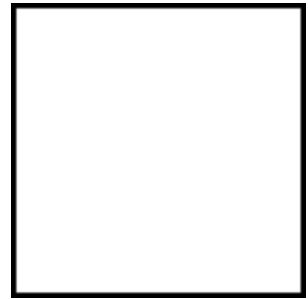
8 The air pressure system worked. But they didn't want the expense of maintaining it. For all
9 intents and purposes they dissolved the program. And the underground went to hell. The
10 company's attitude became "We're not going to maintain a copper plant. We only want
11 fiber. In the words of Verizon's CEO, "We are no longer a telecommunications company.
12 We are now a data and wireless company."

13

14 **What do you know about cable failures and section throws?**

15 I did many section throws in my 24 years as a splicer. In the old days, fewer cables failed
16 because the plant was better maintained. When a cable did fail, we tested every single wire
17 carefully and we didn't make very many mistakes. Most of these cables were repaired in a
18 week or so and we had our customers back in service in a short time.

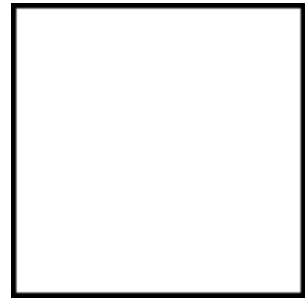
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1 In the early 90's there was a big fire on the 4th floor of a high-rise
2 building down on Wall Street. I think it was 40 Wall but I can't
3 remember exactly. The fire occurred early on Saturday morning and the entire building was
4 out of service. New York Telephone considered it critical to get the building back in service,
5 with an absolute minimum of mistakes, before the stock market opened on Monday
6 morning. I was chosen to help. They brought in cots, food, drinks and snacks and we
7 worked 24 hours per day all weekend, taking rest only when necessary. By 9am Monday
8 morning we had restored eighteen thousand lines with an error rate of less than 1 percent.
9 If we were able to restore our customers' service so quickly then, why is Verizon not doing
10 the same thing now?

11

12 In the old days when a cable failed the mission was to put it back together as quickly as
13 possible and as accurately as possible. If you got good in that capacity, as a splicer, it was
14 like a badge of honor. The goal was to splice 200 pairs in a 12-hour shift. We tested every
15 pair, and every single wire. Now they want 400 pairs in a shift. Management doesn't
16 enforce any sort of accuracy or monitor work for quality. All they want to know is, "How
17 many did you get done?" Management doesn't care about mistakes, only numbers, so the
18 guys struggle to meet a quota that is impossible if you properly verify each wire. After a
19 section throw is finished now, they have to send people out for weeks or months to repair
20 what has been messed up. They stopped giving us enough time to do the "throw" properly,



1 so splicers and repair techs scramble around for months trying to
2 restore dial tone to our customers.

3

4 **Can you give some specific examples of service quality problems?**

5 These examples are all within the past several years:

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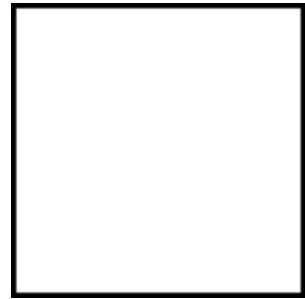
7 1- In December of 2013 I began work at a cable failure at 5th Avenue and 78th
8 Street. On April 17, 5 MONTHS LATER, my colleagues were still working to put
9 those customers back in service, and they were still working there when I was
10 sent elsewhere to start work on the next emergency. Five months is too long for
11 customers to have no telephone service.

12

13 2- From April 18 to May 29, 2014 I worked on a cable failure at 7th Avenue and 56th
14 Street. It took 6 weeks to repair because the cables were buried and it took 4
15 weeks to make them accessible. Proper maintenance would have prevented
16 this. The failure left hundreds of business and residential customers with no
17 telephone for a period of several months.

18

19 3- On February 26, 2014 I was sent to 47th Street and 5th Avenue, the jewelry
20 district, where our cables had failed for the SECOND TIME. What I saw shocked



1 me. The streets were lined with armored cars. Not the
2 little ones you see all the time going from the
3 supermarket to the local bank; these were the size of tractor-trailers. Uniformed
4 security guards, with guns, were scurrying all over the block. Once again a
5 Verizon cable failure knocked out ALL the alarm systems and again they were
6 left that way for MONTHS. One month later the failure was still not repaired and
7 hundreds of business and alarm lines were still not working. Trouble tickets
8 persisted for many, many months. When I left the company, an entire year
9 later, in February of 2015, 47th Street had failed AGAIN, for the third time in a
10 year and a half and working on those repairs was my final assignment. Verizon
11 was continuing to apply Band-Aids rather than fixing the problems.

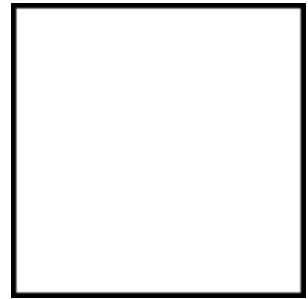
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13 **Was there equipment in the field that had passed its useful life?**

14 There's equipment everywhere that's past its useful life. To this day there are very old
15 porcelain terminals, installed in the 40's and early 50's that have never been replaced. They
16 are very often broken and in pieces, but they're still in place on the buildings.

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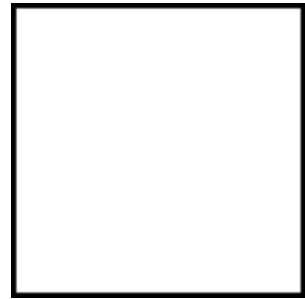
18 The telephone facilities that existed in the late 90's were already inadequate to provide our
19 customers with proper service. Plus, starting around then things got worse and worse. In
20 2001 I was placed in a group called "held for cable", an offshoot of construction. If



1 someone ordered telephone service and there weren't enough
2 facilities, our job was to figure out any way possible, no mater
3 what, to get them in service so the company didn't HAVE to fix the plant in order to
4 complete the service order. Our mission was to do whatever we had to do to get service to
5 the customer, PERIOD! Many times that meant sticking things together with scotch tape,
6 and glue.

7

8 A DAML (Digitally Added Main Line) is a device that takes one pair of wires and uses it to
9 carry two dial tones when no proper facilities are available. There were places we
10 nicknamed DAML City where dozens and dozens and dozens of these devices were tie-
11 wrapped on chain link fences or on walls inside buildings and actually covered the fences
12 and walls like paint. You couldn't see through the equipment that coated the fence or wall.
13 Customers hated them because they weren't as reliable as a regular line, and the sound
14 quality was horrible. The PSC jobs of the early to mid-90s to bring the plant into a state of
15 repair were long gone, so we put up the DAMLs. In an effort to provide better service than
16 a DAML could provide but still not as good as even a decent copper pair, if we could, we
17 opened splices and split "bad" pairs to "scab together" an adequate pair. We'd run drop
18 lines, against PSC rules, from one building to the next. We were working in an environment
19 that had once been a functioning plant, but had become totally decrepit. The facilities were
20 old and antiquated but the company refused to do anything to maintain or repair it.



1

2 **Were you able to get the tools and equipment you needed to do**
3 **the job?**

4 When I first started we had a huge room for tools and supplies. You were free to go in and
5 get what you needed. Then they stopped doing that. They drew a white line across the
6 floor that we were forbidden to cross. Tools had to be signed for by your boss. You had to
7 submit a form for supplies with the job number the night before. Then that stopped also
8 and if we needed tools we were told, "No. We don't have those."

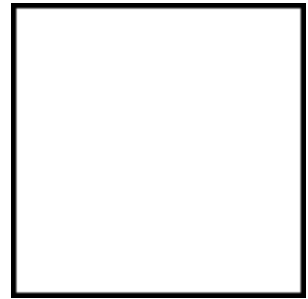
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10 By the late 90s the situation was so bad if you needed a screwdriver you went to hardware
11 store and bought it. In the early 2000s you couldn't get tools. They weren't buying tools.
12 They were saying we used tools too much. As they converted more to fiber, the guys who
13 were doing fiber got all the tools they needed, but the techs who were doing copper
14 couldn't get anything.

15

16 **What conclusions do you draw from your years of service at Verizon?**

17 I am both proud and thankful for my years with "The Phone Company." I am proud to have
18 contributed at 40 Wall Street and I feel privileged to have made a contribution at both the
19 New York City Police Academy and at Ground Zero after the World Trade Center disaster.
20 In spite of that, however, there have been many times that I was embarrassed by my



1 company's lack of concern for its customers. There is no good
2 reason that customers should be forced to accept service
3 outages, unsightly equipment and poor sound quality. I hope that from my testimony you
4 can feel the passion that I still feel for my craft and for my customers. Verizon knows how
5 to solve these problems. WE TECHNICIANS know how to solve these problems. How could
6 any company treat its customers this poorly by letting its facilities decay to this extreme?
7 Clearly, the VERIZON CORPORATE CULTURE has changed, and not for the better.
8
9 I urge the Public Service Commission to COMPEL Verizon to make the same kind of effort
10 and show the same kind of concern for its customers that was shown at 40 Wall Street and
11 shown on and in the days, weeks, and months following the World Trade Center disaster of
12 September 11th 2001.