

by Marcin Wichary



ten reasons why I hate my cell

'cause it's scary

The cacophony of sounds when somebody calls me or sends me an SMS is simply frightening. First I get the “preemptive strike” in form of those characteristic noises in my computer’s speakers (okay, that’s how the GSM works, no moaning from me here). Then my cell vibrates and resonates with whatever it lies on at the moment. And only then it’s the time for that obnoxious “beep beep” everybody learned to hate.

What I detest is the middle part. In some instances, it’s like a plane starting. Or an earthquake going off. Or... well, you get the point. Why can’t my phone detect whether it’s laying on flat surface, and turn on/off the vibrating alarm respectively? Come on, I want that thing to alert me or to wake me up, not to trigger a heart attack.

On the other hand, if I actually **wanted** an SMS to wake me up... Bad luck. I can either have a quiet “beep” or a quiet “meep meep,” and that’s it – none of the signals or so-called “melodies” can’t be assigned to SMS alert. (And speaking of melodies, some of my friends can do better with their fingers and front teeth.)

'cause it's unreliable

Once in a while, usually in the most annoying moment possible (Mr. Murphy, you would be proud!), the phone decides to reboot itself. Usually I don't notice it, because you don't really expect it to give your cell a break whenever it feels like it, do you? So, I'm waiting for a very important call and after a lengthy while I finally look at my phone, only to discover that for the last couple of hours (minutes, if I'm lucky) it's been sitting there waiting for my PIN!

Not to mention that I can't use it as a timer either, because it's bound to do the "turn off/turn on/wait for the PIN not doing anything else" trick the very night I decide to rely on it to wake me up for my most important air travel ever.

Speaking of which, if the alarm happens to go off the second I'm trying to turn off the keylock, the phone first displays some garbled graphics, and then just hangs... And it does it so badly, that even removing the SIM card doesn't seem to help. I just have to wait for about half an hour, or risk depressing that little button at the back, which might be reset button, but also, as likely, self-destruct mechanism initiation (as it's not labeled, you see).

'cause it's imprecise

When I receive a message, the phone alerts me and displays a cute window stating *New message: Internet, Read now?* So far, nothing special.

Well, at least until I happen to get two or more messages in a row, and the text in the window changes to somewhat surprising *New message, Read now?* But hey, it's quite alright, because – as years of experience in receiving messages taught me – it's obvious that it's still one message, just... uhm... more of them. Or something.

And, the new messages are sorted “newest first, oldest last,” because it is usually that I like to read them in reversed order and then rearrange them in my head. You see, it's more fun this way.

Plus, in the end, it tells me *No messages* which used to scare the bejesus out of me, because for the first couple of times I failed to acknowledge that what it really meant was “no **new** messages,” and my Inbox was still intact.

'cause it's illogical

Guess what key you have to press in order to type an asterisk in your SMS. You would think that it should be the one with an actual asterisk? Bad luck – it's the one with a hash sign.

Maybe you'd also think that minus sign should be somewhere near the plus sign? Naaah, for your convenience, the key which selects minus sign is in the almost exact opposite corner of the keypad.

(By the way, it's about time someone standardizes all these symbols... Every manufacturer puts them on different keys and it's starting to get really not funny really fast.)

'cause it's slow

Having 50-something SMS messages archived isn't too much of a stretch – even in normal day-to-day use – but seems a very serious deal for the phone, which *Please waits* me for the whole eight seconds every time I open an inbox! That's right, 50 messages, at most 8 kilobytes of data, and just displaying a simple list takes so long an old Atari 800XL would be ashamed.

Even right now every time I open my 31-messages-long inbox I have to wait 4 seconds, which is far from comfortable (the same thing applies to Sent items and other lists, obviously).

And I thought “progress” and “processing power” had more in common that just sharing the same page in the dictionary.

'cause it's lazy

Let's say that I enter Sent Items, painfully wait enjoying the ubiquitous *Please wait* window, fight my way to the bottom through all the messages, and finally reach the *Delete all* option (which for some strange reason wasn't put in the menu, but with the messages themselves, looking just like one of them). At this moment I'm already pretty annoyed, but then I get to learn that the engineers over at Ericsson have a somewhat different understanding of the word "all." Why couldn't they just name the option "delete some" (because it's precisely what it does, leaving some of the messages intact and forcing me to delete them manually one by one) is beyond me.

Oh yeah, probably because such option would look pretty stupid, wouldn't it?

'cause it's demanding

There is no key to let me quickly jump to the beginning or the end of the message list. No Home/End – which computer keyboards have since, like, forever – no holding down arrows, nothing. I could live with that, even with the aforementioned *Delete all* option hidden below all the messages.

But... This is just the beginning. If I, for example, decide to delete the message I no longer need, the cursor jumps to some arbitrary place – and it's usually somewhere down the list, even if I erased the message at the very top. And then I have two choices: I can manually move the highlight back, or get out of the inbox and immediately return – either solution not very intuitive and, what should already be obvious, terribly time-consuming.

So, let me recapitulate. You stop deleting messages, 'cause the process is slow and complicated. As a result, the messages pile in your Inbox, and it's getting bigger and bigger, and consequently slower and slower... When you finally run out of memory and you're forced to make room, you can't even do a "delete all and get the hell outta here" maneuver, and on top of that – deleting individual messages is also as painful as it can be.

Heard that thump? That's user friendliness hitting rock bottom.

'cause it's unfriendly

And, speaking of which...

I can't simply activate the keylock by holding C (or any other) button – I have to confirm my selection by choosing an option from the big fat menu of **two** options. And, of course, turning off keylock requires a different set of keystrokes, 'cause it would be just too beautiful to have consistency across a set of two related features.

The C button has also been absent-mindedly assigned to too many different functions. When I receive a message, I get the aforementioned window asking me whether I want to read it. I can press Yes to read it, and No to remove the window. That's quite okay, only if I have my keypad blocked, I should activate it first, using the C-then-Yes combination. Unfortunately, if I think the keypad is blocked, and in fact it is not (and it's not so obvious to figure it out – the on-screen indicator is invisible beneath the window, and the auto-deactivate feature might've jumped in at any second), trying to lift the block will result in dismissing the window. Sometimes it happens to me a couple of times **daily**.

Want more? Guess what you have to do if you accidentally pressed the dreaded C button instead of the last letter of "goodbye" ending your 500-characters-long message? Yep. Type that thing all over again. After pressing C the message gets moved to Unsent without any shred of confirmation and any way to re-edit it later.

And believe me, it happens all the time – and it's not that my fingers are awfully big, it's just that these keys are awfully small. The stand-alone keyboard, expensive as it is, seems equally dreadful and last time I checked, I didn't have 12 pockets in any of my jackets anyway.

'cause it's weird

If you could just look at the message which one day all of a sudden appeared in my T65's inbox. It has a date of the 9th of... the 23rd month – I must've slept during that part of my Gregorian Calendar Advanced Training – of eleventh year (and which century is that I don't even wanna know). And it's 17th hour... but the minutes here are the best of the bunch.

What in the cellular hell does ?3 mean? Is it like... what, every ten minutes? Or a question in Spanish? Or is my cell unsure? (well, at least for the first time it'd be acknowledging its incompetence). The phone number is no better (+0994463?000), but the message itself is, alas, empty.

I'm not sure if I'm ready to delete it, maybe it's a one of a kind first contact message from aliens? Or a remnant of an intercepted classified government communication? Or maybe, as the realist in me would put it, just a useless bit of malformed data cluttering my inbox?

In any case, I didn't want it in the first place.

'cause it's ugly

So okay, it's definitely not "fugly ugly" – after all, it has a nice big screen and a handsomely-shaped back, among other things... but all that is effectively ruined by one simple fact.

About the only thing I liked in Ford's (infamous) "you can have your car in any color you want, as long as it's black" quote was the "black" part. And that's simply because I wear only blacks and grays. With T65 I wasn't that lucky, and I was stuck with blue. And I don't like blue. Blue doesn't become me. (I'd also say "blue makes me blue," only it'd sound really cheesy.) But even being an aesthete I am, I don't think I would pick up a different phone based solely by its looks. So, the only thing ruining my perfect black-gray appearance (pale skin included) is that blue phone with green blinking LED.

Drat.

(What I found out just recently is that there are actually three color schemes for the phone, but the choice between Hey I'm On Mushrooms Blue, Bottom Of The Old Cheese Sandwich Yellow and Toothbrush Nightmare Cyan just seems a lost battle.)

say what?

You know, I don't really need WAP or GPRS (and I presume neither of the other fancy acronyms I know nothing about). I don't use multimedia messaging (and since when ZX Spectrum-quality graphics is multimedia?). I don't care much about scheduler or calendar for the very simple reason that the prospect of coping with such a lousy shadow of keyboard even more often puts me a mile away (not surprisingly, the T9 dictionary is not localized... and I'd rather use Morse to type – it's probably as problematic, but at least it would look pretty damn cool) and, unfortunately, the phone lacks Bluetooth or any other form of connection to some other device.

What I need is some basic functionality. I want to talk, I want to listen, I want to send messages, I want to set some alarms. These are things one would suppose first-generation NMT analog phones should already be capable of and the second wave get 100% right. But nope, here I am, a decade later, with one of the most respected manufacturer's late offering, and it feels like the years of progress have somehow found their way around basic usability issues.

I could've easily come up with twice or thrice as many problems in this disturbingly squib-like paper. As a matter of fact, there were numerous instances when I just wanted to slam that phone on the wall, the only thought stopping me being “come on, that's your company's cell, it's not worth it.” (So okay, there was also another, “hey, what if I hurt myself?”) Sure, there are some good things, but I liked my derelict Nokia 3210 better, even with its sluggishness and half-dead battery.

And – since we all know how much 3210 does suck – that one sentence itself should say a lot.