

# GSM Today

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Happy Birthday GSM!  
By Sagai John Adam  
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On August 9th, GSM will be 1 in Nigeria. And what a year it has been. The term "GSM" has become the most popular word in Nigeria. Econet Wireless and MTN have become household names (as well as much maligned names too). GSM Subscribers have moved from 0 to over 1 million in the past 12 months. People who have never dreamt of having Cellphones and enjoying the advantages of communications can now do so.

This is our story.

How GSM has affected us.

What GSM has become to us.

What new things GSM has brought.

What bad things it has also ushered in.

#### **New Terms**

We have learnt new terms:

TARIFFS -what they charge us.

ACCESS DAYS -how long they let us talk.

080 -GSM phone numbers all start with these 3 numbers.

BUDDIE -Econet Wireless prepaid service.

PAY AS YOU GO -Money first, call later.

VOICEMAIL -your personal "answering machine".

CALL CREDITS -what we need to make calls.

SMS -sending text messages and many more.

SYSTEM IS BUSY -keep re-dialing.

We have even formed our own:

>> G-ZIM (GISIM or GEEZIM) -a crude pronunciation of GSM.

>> FLASHING -when you call a person long enough for them to see your name and end the call before they answer.

### **What GSM Has Made Possible**

Our lives have been greatly improved (our lives I said, not our Pockets!) We can now do what couldn't do before.

Our lives have changed.

We have changed.

>> We can now...Call our relative's abroad from our bedrooms.

>> We can now...Call for help when armed robbers strike or when the car packs up on the way.

>> We can now...Relay time-critical information without having to pack our bags and travel.

>> We can now... Annoy everybody with beeps during church services and office meetings.

>> We can now...Make money selling recharge cards on the streets.

### **Problems and Challenges**

We now have to grapple with new problems like...Thieves that steal our Cellphones. Like...How to pay for our phone bills (and our Spouse, and the dog...). Like...Getting back our privacy since the boss can get us now at all times. Like...Driving and talking at the same time.

That's not all! We can only hope and pray that these thorny issues will be resolved one day soon:

>> We should be billed "per second" and not "per minute".

>> The call tariffs should be reduced to affordable levels.

>> The vexed "access" days should be extended or better yet, scrapped.

>> There should not be congestion of the network.

>> The GSM networks and the incumbent operator Nitel should resolve the interconnection issues so w talk to each other again.

### **GSM Winners and Losers**

In this past 1 year, GSM has brought smiles to some faces and brought sorrow to others. It has been a blessing and a curse. Some have won and some have lost.

Here the Winners:

- 1) New subscribers (those who are just getting connected or are yet to).
- 2) Newspapers.
- 3) GSM dealers / Cellphone distributors.
- 4) The GSM operators (Econet Wireless and MTN).
- 5) Nitel.
- 6) Thieves, pick pockets and armed robbers.

Here are the Losers:

- 1) Early GSM adopters/subscribers (Remember those N20,000 SIM cards?)
- 2) Private Telecom operators (PTO's) and Internet Service Providers (ISP's).
- 3) The Nigerian elite.

(See GSM Today issues #6 and #7 for the full story. To read it, visit:  
<http://www.freelists.org/archives/gsmtoday/03-2002/fullthread1.html>)

### **First Movers**

We also salute the innovators and fast movers who have brought out GSM-related products that go beyond the usual recharge cards.

**MTECH** allows us to send and receive emails via WAP (Wireless Application Protocol).

**Sele Telecoms** has published guides on Cellphones so we can make better choices.

**First Atlantic and Equity Bank** allows us to buy airtime with our Cellphones.

**Solution Colony's** [www.SMSNigeria.com](http://www.SMSNigeria.com) let's us send SMS from our PC's.

**GSM Today** e-zine teaches us about GSM via email.

### **Things Will Get Better**

As we celebrate the first year of GSM, we are happy that things are changing. The high tariffs and charges are dropping. It is not as fast as we would want but, it is dropping.

Here are some examples:

Connection fee

- Down from N20,000 to N9,000 today.

Voicemail and CLI (MTN)

- Down from N6 per minute to free today.

Econet Wireless BusinessPartna "monthly access /subscription /rental fee"

- Down from N4,000 to N2,500 today.

International calls on all the GSM networks

- Down from N125 to N100 today.

Now that the House of Representatives have started fighting the GSM network operators, we can be sure that more tariff reductions are coming.

All in all it has been a very good year for everyone. GSM has brought a lot of good and we are happy it came.

We love you GSM.

Happy birthday!

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Sagai John Adam is the Editor of GSM Today Ezine, which is Nigeria's  
FIRST Ezine dedicated to helping people "recover their GSM investments".  
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