

Bullying Prevention Service Wins Global Innovation Award for Vodafone New Zealand and Telsis

A unique service that enables parents in New Zealand to protect their children against bullying by text and picture messaging has won Vodafone New Zealand and its technology partner Telsis a joint global award for innovation.

Known as Blacklist and offered free to all Vodafone New Zealand customers since November 2010, the service has had remarkable results. Previously Vodafone was handling some 500 complaints a month about bullying. Six months after launch, nearly 16,000 customers had joined Blacklist and complaints had fallen substantially.

Yesterday, the world's premier telecommunications industry publication, Global Telecoms Business, presented Vodafone New Zealand and Telsis jointly with the annual Consumer Service Innovation Award, recognising the social responsibility shown by Vodafone New Zealand and the technical innovation of its partner Telsis. The Global Telecoms Business Innovation Awards are presented in five categories.

Blacklist is one of a portfolio of smart SMS network services developed by Telsis aimed at enabling mobile operators to drive customer acquisition, reduce churn and in some cases increase revenues.

The system works for all types of handsets. To block a malicious sender, the mobile phone user simply texts the offending phone number to Vodafone New Zealand. From then on, no further text or picture messages are delivered, and the sender is unaware that their attacks are not getting through. Users can review and delete numbers on their Vodafone Blacklist with similarly simple commands and each user can block up to 20 numbers.

Telsis Chairman and founder Jeff Wilson said the award highlighted the way in which smart SMS network services could generate multiple wins for operators. "The deployment of Blacklist was the personal initiative of Vodafone New Zealand CEO Russell Stanners. He saw that

Vodafone could make a social contribution and help protect young people from harm, and we have seen charities and others working in the child protection field queuing up to congratulate Vodafone New Zealand on its initiative.

"If I was living in New Zealand, I would have no doubts about which network I would want my family to be using."

Vodafone CEO Russell Stanners says that as an industry leader Vodafone takes its responsibility seriously. "Whilst text and picture messaging are great technologies it's important we put the power in our customers' hands so they have control over who contacts them. And it's working. The number of complaints received to our text bullying service has plummeted to just a handful. We are proud to be able to offer Vodafone Blacklist free to all our customers."

In presenting the Awards, Alan Burkitt-Gray, editor of Global Telecoms Business, commented: "This is the fifth time we've run the Global Telecoms Business Innovation Awards and this year we saw more nominations, from a greater range of operators and vendors, than ever before.

"We started the Awards in order to celebrate what the industry is doing, making a huge difference to the world, to all of us in business and as consumers.

"This is a sure sign the industry is working harder and harder to deliver exciting and innovative services to customers worldwide. We've seen a greater number of nominations for services directly aimed at businesses and consumers, designed to give them better services and make their lives easier.

"Congratulations to all of this year's award winners and to Vodafone New Zealand and Telsis for the Blacklist project."



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