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September 29, 2016

Customer Relations
Toyota (GB) plc
Great Burgh
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Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5UX

Dear Sir/Madam,

At 12:31 on 15th September 2016, I phoned Johnsons Toyota Liverpool to book a service and MOT for my Yaris (registration number PK05 VVF). At the time there were apparently problems with the computer so a booking couldn't be taken but a gentleman took down my details and told me someone would phone me back.

A couple of hours later, at 14:25, a lady phoned from a Redditch number, 0152 758 3000, to take my booking. We arranged a date for the service and MOT and for me to have use of a courtesy car. The lady annoyingly tried to sell me some extra service of the engine which I declined. She gave me a total cost and the booking was completed.

On the appointed day, 27th September, I brought in my car around 9am. I spoke to a lady named Natalie. Natalie mentioned something about extra oil and that she believed all the costs had been explained to me over the phone. I told her that nobody had taken me through the costs. I was in a hurry and didn't think much of it; I presumed this was some essential part of the service. I signed some paperwork and took the courtesy car.

When I returned at the end of the day, I gave the courtesy car's keys to Natalie, paid, and took my own keys. When I got to my car, I opened the boot and found a bottle of oil attached to the boot floor with Velcro. I presumed the technicians had given me the remainder of whatever oil they had used during the service. I thought that was good of them. However, when I got home and took the oil out of the boot, I was amazed to find that it was a full, unopened bottle. When I looked at the invoice, I was absolutely astonished to discover a line for "1 LTR 5W30" at a cost of £12.49 (excluding VAT).

At 10:23 on 28th September, I phoned Johnsons Toyota Liverpool again and asked to speak to Natalie. When Natalie came on the line, I explained that I had discovered the bottle of oil in my boot together with the line on the invoice and asked her why this bottle of oil had appeared. What followed was a somewhat difficult conversation during which Natalie avoided responding directly to my questions and repeatedly parroted her understanding of Toyota's booking system.

Natalie told me (repeatedly) that (1) the person in the call centre who made the booking would have gone through the cost of everything (and said this repeatedly despite my repeatedly pointing out that this didn't happen in my case), (2) they do not do anything that is not authorised by the customer and (3) they go through the intended work with the customer, including the cost, when the customer brings their car in. Natalie pointed out that she did mention the "addition oil" (or something to that effect) and its cost to me on the 27th. I pointed out that on the 27th, I had

responded that no such costs had been discussed with me on the phone. Natalie did state that I could return the oil for a refund which I said I would do. However, we did not discuss the cost of my time or the cost of transportation in returning the oil.

Though this conversation was extremely difficult, I did manage to learn that there was something called a “job card” which is created by those who book in services, who reside in something called “the call centre”. I could not get any coherent response, despite my repeated asking, on the question of how the oil had appeared on the job card.

The invoice (document no. 14111673, job no. 10120345, vehicle no. N 105808) gives no clue as to how the oil appeared. Indeed, I am utterly flummoxed as to the status of oil in my car as oil is mentioned on four different lines: “(EO) 5W30 FE”, “1 Liter Oil Top-up”, “ADDED 1 LITRE OIL TOP-UP” and the aforementioned “1 LTR 5W30”. It is not clear if all or only one of these lines refers to my extra, unwanted bottle. Nor is it clear what else they might refer to.

The impression that I now have is that somebody in one of your call centres deliberately and dishonestly added an additional bottle of oil to the job card created for my service booking, for reasons I can only suspect involve material gain such as a commission or a performance incentive. I find it suspicious that the one line in the invoice which includes the £12.49 makes no mention of the word “oil” and only refers to “5W30”. A naïve customer may not be aware that 5W30 is a type of oil and that they have been charged for the full, unopened bottle in their boot. This gives the impression of an attempt to mislead.

I would kindly ask that you answer the following questions:

1. Why did the lady who booked in my service add an extra bottle of oil to the job card?
2. Do you provide any incentives to your call centre operatives for adding extra costed items to job cards?
3. Do you record calls to your call centres?
4. Was my call at 14:25 on the 15th September recorded?
5. If my call was recorded, could you provide me with a copy of the recording?

This entire episode has been a real wake-up call for me. I assumed a certain level of professionalism and competence from Toyota. I trusted Toyota. That trust has been lost. I feel very sad that I will now have to pay very close attention to everything that is said to me if and when I have dealings in the future, for fear of being swindled by some dishonest Toyota employee. I cannot trust that your organisation will be professional. I cannot trust that you will employ real people rather than unthinking, robot-like people. I cannot trust that when I book in a service, your organisation will take care of the details without ripping me off.

I learned to drive comparatively late in life, at the age of 33. Since then I’ve been driving for two years. This episode is the first time that I have considered giving up driving and returning to carlessness. It would seem that huge multinational car manufacturers like yourselves are just as dishonest and unprofessional as anyone else, despite having huge financial resources, enough not to depend on dishonesty. Now I wonder whether the cost of dealing with car manufacturers like Toyota is too high.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Ham