

# **Text Messaging, 31 Oct 1991**

## **Ian Pearson, Futurologist**

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Contact details: [info@futurizon.com](mailto:info@futurizon.com) or [idpearson@gmail.com](mailto:idpearson@gmail.com)

Obviously, I am pretty pleased with this one. I can't find anyone else who thought of text messaging any earlier than this, which captured the typical use of the facility at the outset. I suggested a means that already existed on the main telephone network – MF4 signalling. It is ironic that although text messaging much later took off on the mobile networks, it never did on the fixed line network, even though it would have been easier to implement it there. Anyway, for what it's worth, here is the document that laid out my invention of text messaging:

### **Simple Alphanumeric Messaging Facility**

Ian D Pearson

Network Studies Unit, 31/10/91

Since many home phones already use TouchTone, it only requires the addition of TouchTone receiver circuitry to allow simple alphanumeric messaging between customers.

A customer would make a call in the normal way. Sometimes the called party is unavailable. If the called party has an answer machine, the caller can leave a message on it. However, many customers do not possess answering machines. A much cheaper messaging facility is possible using TouchTone. Using a telephone such as that in figure 1, the caller would be able to type out a simple message. TouchTone does not have enough frequency combinations to give a full alphabet with one keystroke but by preceding each letter with the appropriate coloured button, all letters can easily be achieved (with a few spares).

The modifications to allow this facility should be quite cheap. Small LCD displays and TouchTone receiver chips are inexpensive so phones with this facility could be offered relatively cheaply compared to answering machines. BT has an interest in encouraging messaging facilities for the obvious reasons that a higher proportion of calls are completed and extra calls are often generated by the messages too. Repeat attempts are also reduced. It could therefore be worthwhile to provide such a facility in standard issue telephones, thus creating the critical mass to make the facility useful.

This service could further be enhanced by the use of a no-ring dial-up facility. If all the caller wants to do is to convey a simple message, then this could possibly be offered as a no-ring service if such phones are provided. Maybe this could be tarified differently from normal calls.

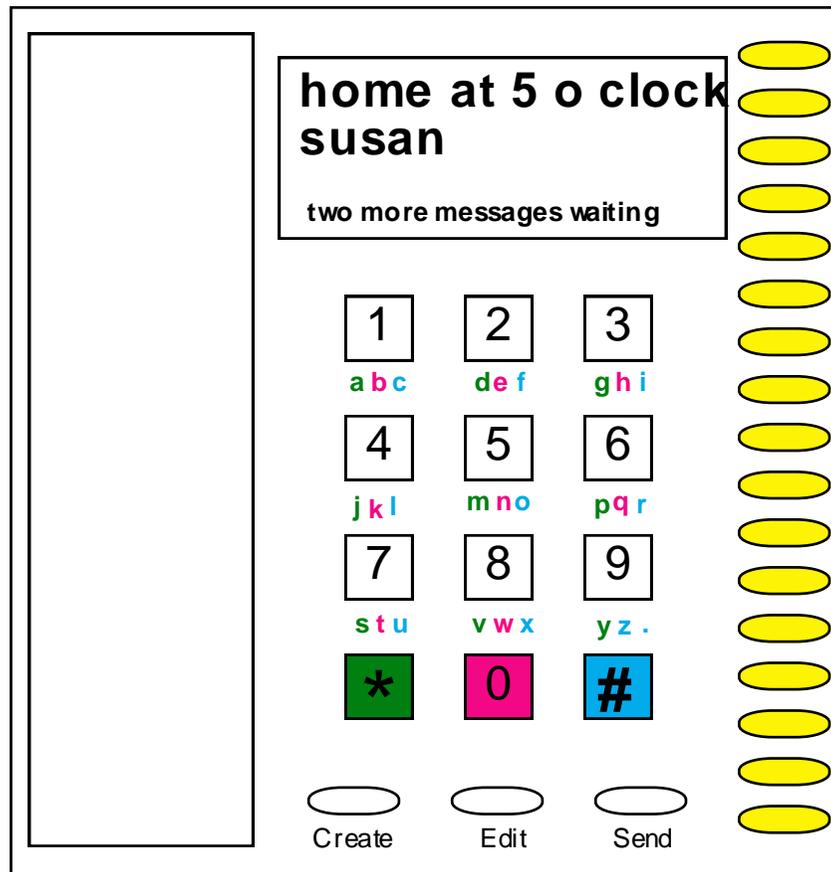


Figure 1 - Phone with Message Capability

#### Advantages

- increases proportion of answered calls
- stimulates traffic
- reduces repeat attempts
- introduces people to concept of electronic mail
- could be used with store and forward if number engaged (if store and forward is available)
- could be treated as separate service with different (reduced) tariff
- works well with no-ring dial-up and would work well with alphanumeric pagers
- simple interface