

# CWA @Cingular

CWA's online update for Cingular customer service, sales and network employees

## Retail Sales Rep issues will be a big part of the Cingular Orange Contract Bargaining...

- *An interview with Rachel Tetrault Bailey - Cingular Inside Sales Rep and bargaining committee member...*

**Q: Rachel, what's your job at Cingular?**

**Rachel:** I'm an inside sales representative at a hub store in Albany, NY, for the past seven years. At that location there are Sales Support Reps, Service Technicians, Finance II Rep, Corporate Care Reps (BSS), and Wireless Tech II's. The inside sales reps are the face of Cingular to the customers who come into the stores. Sales reps not only sell phones and service to new and existing customers, we also help customers with virtually any problem they come in with.

**Q: What is the toughest part of the job?**

**Rachel:** Meeting the unrealistic expectations set by the Company. They are constantly changing our quotas and compensation plans. The real stress on the job comes from some of the policies we work under. They arbitrarily change these policies and these changes directly affect us and our paycheck and job security. The company is always putting up barriers for us doing the job they say they want us to do.

**Q: What are some of these policies?**

**Rachel:** In particular, a program called SAM (Sales Attainment Management), is a way for the company to discipline a sales rep for not meeting their unrealistic expectations for quota. When SAM was first introduced it lumped attendance and sales attainment and performance under one umbrella of discipline. The Union fought to have these measurements separated into different categories so a rep couldn't be disciplined for not meeting quota and the next month get fired for being out sick. We still have a lot to work on because reps go to work every day in fear of losing their job if they can't sell enough to keep up with the company's sales objectives.

**Q: Can you give us some other examples?**

**Rachel:** Internet pricing, charges backs, and unrealistic quotas and no quota relief. For example, we can be disciplined for not hitting our quota because we can't match the prices the company sets on the internet for the same phones. They have us competing against ourselves. When a customer comes into the store, they may have seen other Cingular offers or special deals at Best Buy, agents or on the Cingular website, and they expect to get that deal at the Cingular store. It's called price matching; but we're not allowed to do that. We're not even allowed to match the same deals on Cingular's own website! We lose

the sale and a lot of our customers will walk out of the store without buying anything. We're told that if we were real salespeople, we would be able to talk the customers into paying the additional \$50.00 or whatever the difference is.

**Q: What about the quotas?**

**Rachel:** The quotas are not consistent and fluctuate not according to sales history or any logical data but are arbitrary numbers that roll down to the reps from the top based on what the company hopes to earn in a particular month. Many months we have to put grievances in for adjustments because no one in the store came even close to the 70 percent of quota that we need to hit to avoid discipline. In some cases, they might adjust the SAM percentage but not the actual quota so we can make some money.

**Q: What are chargebacks?**

**Rachel:** Chargebacks are a Catch 22. If you meet your quota for the month and then for example the next month a couple of customers cancel their service or fail to pay their bills, you receive a chargeback for those customers. That means we have to pay back the commissions earned for those sales in the current month, which could bring you below the targeted 70 percent even if you would have been well about target without chargebacks. It's one thing to charge back the commission money - that's bad enough and makes your income very uncertain - but it's another thing to factor chargebacks from previous sales when calculating performance for purposes of discipline. Why should we be disciplined for a customer not paying their bill? We did our job when we sold them the service. The practice needs to end and we need to address it in bargaining.

**Q: But don't you get quota relief?**

**Rachel:** Please, quota relief is a joke. We don't get true quota relief. While we do get relief pay, it still does not compensate us truly for what we would have sold if we did not take vacation time. When we take a vacation, they still hold us accountable for the whole month's quota!

**Q: What about job security?**

**Rachel:** That's definitely an issue. Stores will close due to the AT&T Wireless acquisition, no doubt about it. Our position is that no rep under this contract should lose a job due to a store closing in merger consolidation. The company has made that commitment to CWA, but we want to put teeth into it during these negotiations. If a store closes, we want a definite job offer and pay protection for each employee at the location.

**Q: Is the committee prepared for these negotiations?**

**Rachel:** Definitely. We've been preparing for this for the last four years. I was on the first negotiating committee in 2000, so I've been here before. I'm really impressed with the people on this committee and we all have a lot of confidence in one another. We have a lot of Cingular and CWA experience represented on the committee - retail, network and call center. We're very excited about the membership mobilization that's taking place - our co-workers are psyched and that's what will get us the contract we need and deserve.