

Customer Services
Manchester Arena

Victoria Station
Manchester
M3 1AR

Friday, 13 April 2012

Dear Sir/Madam,

I recently tried to purchase a wheelchair accessible ticket at your venue for the Lady Gaga concert on September 11th 2012 as part of a gift for my best friend's birthday. To say I was disappointed with the level of customer service and technical provision that your Special Needs line currently provides is an understatement.

I received an email from O2 priority on Tuesday 10 April that advanced bookings were being taken for this concert starting at 9am on Wednesday 11 April through the O2 priority website. When I have previously booked through this for O2 venues there has either been:

- an accessible booking request form online that can be filled in so that representatives can make further contact as necessary
- a suggestion from venues that wheelchair users continue to purchase an ordinary ticket
- a request to contact the arena Special Needs line directly

I rang your Special Needs line on Wednesday 11th at 10am and continued to ring until 10:28am when I was finally able to get through to the representative. They informed me that O2 priority tickets were not available for sale until the following day and advised I should call back at 10am. I was more than willing to do this. However I would like to point out that if users requiring special access want to sit next to a group of their friends during a performance beyond the few seats that are also available in these areas, then by delaying the release of these tickets by even 24 hours is depriving these ticket buyers from having exactly the same opportunity as any other ticket buyer. Many would see this as a form of discrimination, whether intentional or not.

On Thursday morning, as expected the line was very busy and engaged. At 10:15am, 10:27am, 10:48am, 11:17am and 11:45am I was able to get a ringing tone, but was then extremely disappointed when the line was disconnected by your end after 2 minutes with no opportunity to either leave a message or retain my place in the queue. It was not until 4pm that I was finally able to leave a message with my details, hoping on the off chance that someone might call me back.

On Friday morning (13th) at 10am again I was unable to get through to a representative and even unable to leave a message, leaving me confused as to how to proceed. I tried ringing through the main box office number and even went through Ticketmaster directly. Both only recommended continuing to persist ringing your dedicated line. Whilst continuing with this approach, I also emailed the contact provided on your website to see if this would progress my enquiry further.

Eventually I managed to get through to a representative on your dedicated line who informed me that the small number of tickets that you had available were sold out. When I enquired as to when

these tickets had sold out, your representative could not confirm this information, only to say that people who had left messages requesting tickets had been called back by your representative since 9am that morning.

I am more than willing to accept that the number of accessible tickets that you have on offer for any event is likely to be small. With popular acts I accept that demand for these tickets is incredibly high. My experience though must surely not be an isolated case, and only highlights that the current system you have in place is woefully inadequate to meet the high volume of demand in such instances. Your website information and automated phone responses are confusing and lack any sufficient detail to inform customers as to what process they should follow to best attempt to secure ticket purchases. I rang your dedicated line every 20 seconds for nearly 2 hours on Thursday morning and was given no hint as to being able to leave a message for a call back or email a representative requesting further information. It was only through my own intuition that I tried emailing and eventually being able to leave a message on Thursday afternoon.

Whilst writing this I have been contacted by one of your representatives to confirm that all of the tickets sold out. When I enquired as to when the tickets d sold out and when O2 priority tickets were made available from, she informed me that 5 priority tickets were sold on Wednesday morning within 5 minutes. This directly contradicts what I was told by your representative when I finally managed to get through at 10:28am as mentioned previously. She confirmed that this allocation was 20% of the overall wheelchair access tickets that you had available for priority sale. Can you please confirm that for an arena capacity of 13,500, that you only have 25 wheelchair spaces available? If so, does that represent a fully equal opportunity based on those numbers?

If someone else beats me to purchasing the tickets, that's fair enough and I can accept that. I do not believe that I have been properly informed throughout this process to give me the best chance of attending such a popular event. Whilst I don't expect that this will change my outcome for this particular event I would appreciate it if you could take this experience on board and accept that I will not be the only person to have gone through this. I would strongly recommend that you consider:

- reviewing your website and affiliate sites (O2 priority) information that you provide
- investing in systems so that provide proper automated advice and responses during times of high demand which do not
 - leave customers confused as to what process to follow
 - cut off or simply hang up on the users
 - permanently engage your phone line
 - limit the number of messages that can be left by users for call backs
 - rely solely on a handful of representatives which clearly currently struggle to meet immediate high demand in a sufficiently short and responsive space of time.

I work in Information Technology and speak from experience when I know the technology exists for you to service customers with such needs in a far better manner. I have a number of ideas which could improve your current systems and would be happy to discuss these further with you.

Yours sincerely,


Rob Moriarty