KUALA LUMPUR: It was a telephone call that made little sense: an offer to resell for RM17,000 a time-sharing package, bought for RM9,945 some time in 1999.

The offer made to Yusof Sadri on July 25, 2004 had a catch though: Yusof, a senior executive, had to pay the time-sharing company consultant RM2,300.

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The sum was "refundable" if the membership was not sold in a year.
 Yusof, 46, has not seen a single sen from the company in the last two years.

Yusof said he wanted to sell the membership as he had problems booking a room during peak periods.

"It was always full. What's the point of going on holidays after the school holidays?

"Plus, I had to pay RM380 a year to renew the membership."

That was precisely why the resale offer was so tempting.

But Yusof could not take his problem to the Consumer Claims Tribunal as he could not serve his statement of claim as the company had ceased to exist.

In Kuala Terengganu, the offer of great destinations and cheap accommodation last year was too hard to resist for restaurant proprietor P.K. Ma.

Since then, he has lost RM5,000 and the only trip he wants to take now is to the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Ma claims he was duped into buying a time-sharing programme at a travel fair by a salesman from an international hotel. He was promised many benefits, including the availability of hotel rooms at peak seasons.

And if there were no rooms, the club would place him in another hotel as the group was affiliated with a hotel association in Kuala Lumpur.

The salesperson also said membership was limited to 800.

A financial report on the club later revealed membership was in fact over 7,000.

When Ma told the salesman he was interested, he was asked to sign a two-page agreement.

"When I saw the agreement, I became a little wary, wondering where the rest of it was, but the salesperson told me not to worry as they were a big group."

Ma was told the company would refund him if he did not want the membership.

"However, when I decided to go on a holiday with my family, the club said all rooms were taken up and they did not find me an alternative room as promised."

The agent could not be contacted.

Unhappy with the treatment he received, Ma visited the agent at the travel fair again earlier this year, and posing as an interested buyer, asked for the same prospectus.

"The salesman said it would only be given after I signed up. He refused to give me one stating it was company policy."
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Insider's story

FIFTEEN years ago, Michael Pong, 47, was used to be the a salesman person behind the counter, enthusiastically reciting the benefits of time-sharing in Sabah.

Pong, like many of his fellow salesmen, was were trained like a robots, in memorising details of the time-share policy of the principal company and taught to drive a hard bargain.

There is a this technique that pressures the potential customer person to buy the scheme because after we make it hard for them to resist.

The incentive for the salesman was very attractive, he said, and it kept with it snowballing with every successful sale.

For Pong, there is was nothing wrong in the time-sharing concept, although but that the principals sometimes short-changed customers.

The companiesy keep selling memberships, but do not increase the time-sharing facilities. They do not take into account the holiday season.

Some companies even change their policies without informing sales personnel.

Pong said salesmen sometimes made genuine mistakes when selling such deals.

But as a buyer, you should read the agreement thoroughly properly before putting your signature on a piece of paper.