

# contacting companies by telephone drives me mad

The general enquiry number of the cooperative bank has four choices none of which involve speaking to a human being. some clever company has come along and said that you can save 20% of your operator charges by automating the system. What they have said is that you annoy 50% of your customers by having such a system in the first place.

It annoys me that none of the four alternatives given about what I might want actually apply to my question. you can't even press zero you sometimes can to get the operator; they thought of that too. I also don't need to be told that my call is valuable and that all other operators are busy. I sort of got that idea anyway because they didn't answer. I resent the same message being given every 15 seconds especially when it says thank you for holding. I don't have any choice do I?

If they could spend just a little bit more money saying that you are 10th in the queue and we estimate your call will be answered in 3 min 21 seconds that would be great. BT do this to their credit, and they need credit. I have nothing against Indian people and I do realise that their liaison with BT saves money and that such a job must be regarded as a prestige job. However, there is a difference between speaking English and thinking English and I do breathe a sigh of relief when I call 0800 800 150 or whatever it is and gets the BT centre in Scotland. It seems to be a random matter whether you get an English operator or an Indian one.

I have resigned myself having to go through the security questions because there are so many con artists around someone else could easily impersonate me but touch wood, this has not happened for a number of years now save when I ordered a mobile phone someone impersonating me, ran up a large bill,

and the company charged me for it. I complained and the money paid was refunded.

Sometimes I abandon the hope of speaking to an actual human being and rely on the instant chat essentially by SMS message. The problem is that the operator is not just responding to your written query but a number of others as well so you can be waiting almost a couple of minutes for a response but I think on balance this is a more reliable method. When I lost my mobile phone a few days ago I used the SMS method with a person from India. I reported the theft of my seven and the phone about 1:30 PM and next morning at 10:30 a new SIM card had arrived.

Other practices of operators I object to is asking me "can I call you Brian". I always tell them that I don't really care what they call me so long as I get service. is always grinds on mean when they endlessly repeat "Mr Snellgrove" or "Brian" because someone is told in the script that it is more bonding. I find it more irritating. I suppose they had to ask you at the end "is there anything else I can do for you". I suppose it by optimism I would expect them to imagine that I had constructed a list of things and if I say thank you very much that means I don't have anything to discuss. I could of course have been wicked and said, "well actually there is something, I'm not getting on very well with my wife, do you have any comment on the matter?"