

## Don't it just drive you *mad...*

Derek Dutson has E-mailed me and refers us back to January's column about BT and their appalling customer service. 'Jack Gibson was very fortunate in actually speaking to Claudia at BT Customer Services. No doubt he is younger than I at 84. At my age they at C.S.Durham, India and Scotland are not prepared to listen to a fellow who has gone passed his sell-by date.'

It was actually me, who spoke to Claudia while researching Jack's complaint and I felt my own sell-by date looming while I waited forever to get connected to somebody. Derek's email then gives a long, and in my opinion, quite an understandable rant about BT. 'I have opted for paperless billing. I attempted to view my account for the period ending 2nd. August only to be advised due to technical reasons it was not available. As a safeguard I arranged a bank payment similar to the previous quarter. All was quiet until I downloaded my account for the period ending 4th. November. I was invoiced £21.27 for a BT Voyager and £12 for a late payment charge. To these VAT had been added. The Voyager had been sent to me in error and was returned on 22nd. August. Fortunately I was given a proof of posting as I was subsequently requested (email) by BT Billing in India to send at least 2 copies of the proof to them. To add insult, I was advised one day that all calls made by me would not be connected.'

As we try to make our bill paying systems smoother, they inevitable go horribly wrong. I must include the following points from Derek's E-mail: (I smiled while reminiscing over the times these things have happened to me and how I wanted to scream).

1. 'After telephoning India I was advised the call would be transferred to a colleague, music was then played for

about 30 seconds before the line went dead.

2. No acknowledgement to my letters.

3. Advised by email to look at the reverse side of my paperless bill!!

4. Told that after having a telephone account for more than 60 years I should consider setting up a Direct Payment

5. As I am registered why should I be advised by email to visit [www.bt.com](http://www.bt.com).

6. I am still thanked, by email, after all this for using BT, also apologies for the inconvenience.'

I can't remember the amount of times I have been put on hold, or transferred and some featherbrain cuts me off. It drives me insane, especially when I have pressed all the required buttons and been bounced from one unhelpful person to another, just to get to that point. I prefer the smaller companies, where you phone up and get a "real" person and often a person who knows what the company sells and (shock horror) how to help you. BT can be a total nightmare, as with most service providers, the service either runs along faultlessly or falls spectacularly to pieces. It doesn't help that although there are many companies offering broadband and phone connection, such as the post office, tiscali and Sky to name only a few, you always need a BT line! BT has a monopoly on landlines and unfortunately that means there is no current alternative and there is not likely to be in the near future. Maybe if there were, BT would sort all their problems out. Some direct competition would do them the world of good and hopefully us mere mortals, who have to use the service, would reap the benefits.

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