

Dear Sir,

It is my firm belief that all numbers involving charges over and above the normal geographic charges should be abolished. Fiddling with and regulating services is pointless, since crooks will always find a way to cheat the public if given the slightest opportunity.

I believe the charging system for calls should revert to the system that applied years ago, when there were no premium numbers or shared revenue numbers, and costs of calls were well known in advance.

There seems to be tacit acceptance by everyone in the telecomms business that call charges should be as obscure as possible, and set at multiple levels. Call costs should be as transparent as postal charges were before the recent introduction of size and shape charges (another imposition on the public).

0845 numbers, which were originally put in place as a service to the consumer in order to make their calls cheaper, should be permitted, provided they cost no more than the standard local rate, and are subject to discount by call providers if they choose. All other numbers should be charged at geographic rates, and again should be subject to discounts. Any charging or revenue sharing leading to calls' costing more than geographic rates are simply an invitation to fraud, or at best, a sop to companies who cannot be bothered to set up an efficient call answering service. As a reminder of how things used to be, I quote Lloyds Bank, who some years ago circulated their customers asking them to report any calls which rang more than four times before being answered by a human who could respond to the caller's requirements.

Although it is not a matter of charging, may I also remind you of BT's current menu system, which seems to have been designed to cause 'fear, uncertainty and dismay', and requires at least four menus with several options each before frequently returning the caller to the start menu. BT used to be proud that their operators could answer within one ring.

Yours

David Kelsey