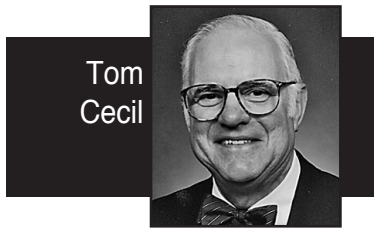


Telephone options on the increase



Tom Cecil

I have noticed an increasing tendency for businesses to inflict telephone options on me when I try to call. I'm sure you must have experienced

the same inconvenience. Millions of Americans run into this aggravation every day causing what must be known as telephone rage.

Let's say the fire department adopted the electronic option system of responding. It could work like this: "If your house is on fire press 1; If your garage is on fire, press 2; If you have a leaf fire, press 3; If steaks are burning up in the kitchen press 4; If your cat is up a tree, press 5." You wait ten

minutes and the same calm voice proclaims, "Your call is very important to us. Please stay on the line and the next available operator will take your call. And thanks for using your friendly neighborhood fire department."

Or dialing the prayer hot line might elicit these choices: "If you want prayer for yourself, press 1; If you want intercessory prayer for others, press 2; if you want to confess your sins to a pastor, press 3."

And, oh yes, if you are calling your family doctor expect this, "Take two aspirin and call our receptionist for an appointment."

Sometimes I hear, "If you are dialing from a rotary phone, dial zero or stay on the line for the next available operator." I'll be honest with you. I always pretend I'm dialing from a rotary phone.

As more electronic choices confront me every day, I have decided to

fight back. No longer will I pick up the phone. My options will be as follows: "If you want money for a political party, press 1; If you want a contribution for a charity, press 2; If I owe you money for an overdue bill, press 3; if you want to borrow money from me, press 4; If my kid goofed up in school, press 5; If you want to chat, press 6 and I may take your call." I yearn for the good old days when a live operator simply said "Hello."

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