fair telecoms campaign **news release**

We call on HMRC, Banks, ISPs and others -
Don't open the door to scammers and nuisance callers

The **fair telecoms campaign** calls on providers of important services to apply a simple rule to their policy for contact with customers:

Never make unsolicited and unexpected telephone calls

This is the second of our three demands in our Campaign to End Nuisance Calls.

To avoid customers being deceived and potentially robbed of large amounts of money by callers with malicious intent, we urge all banks, internet service providers and indeed other businesses likely to seek to conduct business by telephone, to make and apply this plain commitment – ***"We will never contact you by telephone, except at your explicit request"***.

The simple objective is to ensure that any unexpected telephone contact to conduct business, allegedly from a trusted service provider, is immediately rejected, under all circumstances. Unless the call is expected, or conducted under the terms of a secure protocol, the customer has no way of verifying the identity of the caller as a genuine representative of the business.

The only permitted telephone engagement with a customer, for business purposes, should be as a result of them calling a number printed on standard material issued or published by the service provider. Communication to invite or solicit such contact should never give the number or even the (supposed) url of the web site from which it may be obtained.

No Reliable Means of Identification

We strongly reproach those who claim that caller line identification provides any assurance about the identity of the caller, and urge those who draw this assurance to recognise that it is worthless. Mechanisms to provide such assurance are in preparation, but they will not be delivered to the telephone networks for many years.

It should go without saying that the recipient of a telephone call must never be asked to provide secure identification information when they have not been able to verify the identity of the caller. This is however sadly common practice.

Other Measures

We are aware of various techniques that are used and new measures being announced to address this problem.

Whilst they may have some useful effect, the essential problem will remain.

The immediacy and directness of telephone communication makes assured verification of the identity of the caller difficult, if not impossible.

This simple fact must be recognised by the total elimination of any hint of business being transacted on the basis of a call from someone who cannot be assuredly identified.

By failing to clearly state that ***this will never happen*** organisations such as HMRC, banks and internet service providers (or their telecoms agents) are opening the door to scammers.

Even if the intended victim spots the scam, the nuisance effect of the call provides sufficient justification for action to ensure that scammers will have no hope of succeeding.

David Hickson

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