

End of the Line for all Nuisance Phone Calls

Growing Threat of Nuisance Calls Ended by a 'World's First' British Invention

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LONDON, 16th October 2008 – A 'World's first' British invention, which stops unwanted calls from telemarketers, malicious callers, phone scams, banks and identity thieves, has been revealed today, as new research highlights the growing problem of nuisance calls.

trueCall works by creating a "safe zone" between the caller and the receiver which "learns" to distinguish welcome callers from unwelcome callers.

It is the brainchild of two British inventors – Steve Smith and John Price - who saw the impact that nuisance calls were having on their relatives. They decided to act, designing a unique device which simply plugs into your landline at home.

And new independent research, including a MORI poll of 1,000 Britons, shows that the range and scale of nuisance calls is significant:

Silent and malicious calls

- The British Crime Survey reveals that 1.5 million people a year receive repeated calls designed to cause fear or distress - malicious calls – these include indecent, offensive or threatening phone calls and telephone bullying.
- The public receives an estimated 1.5 billion 'silent calls' per year (where the phone rings but there is nobody there when you pick up), even though these are effectively illegal. 50% of Britons receive 6 a month.
- Almost one in five polled (17%) say they feel anxious when they receive a silent call.
- One million people receive over 20 unwelcome calls per month, and half a million receive over 30.

Phone scams

- 70% of Brits surveyed believe they have been the intended victim of a phone scam in the last 12 months.
- The most common type of phone scam tries to get the receiver to call a premium rate phone line (28%)
- The second most common scam was "Vishing" (23%) – voice phishing - trying to collect personal information over the phone by posing as a legitimate institution.

Inventor Steve Smith said: "We are regularly seeing new types of nuisance call and telephone scam appearing. There is very little that people can do to protect themselves against phone-based identity theft, phone bullying and intimidation. It is time to give people the tools to protect themselves against these threats"

Co-Inventor, John Price, said: "trueCall is designed to give people control of their landlines. You can bolt the door and close the curtains, but your landline is the weak link in your privacy. This is especially true for vulnerable people who feel anxious when they receive unwanted calls"

Telemarketing

The Telephone Preference Service (TPS) is extremely effective at reducing the number of nuisance calls received. 60% of UK households are already registered, but it can't stop recorded message calls, calls from market research companies, silent calls, calls from companies who you have dealt with before or malicious calls - and telemarketers are constantly finding new ways of getting around it:

- "Robocalls": Using automated systems to deliver millions of pre-recorded messages. Widely used in the USA, these systems are spreading the UK – e.g. recently used by the Liberal Democrats to campaign to the public.
- "Sugging" & "Frugging": Calling the public under the guise of market research, but then trying to sell products (Sugging) or ask for charitable donations (Frugging).

How does trueCall work?

trueCall monitors each incoming call. If it is from an unrecognised number (or its calling number has been withheld or is not available), trueCall answers the call and asks the caller to say their name. Only then does it ring the phone and tells the householder who is calling. They can then decide whether to take the call. Calls from friends and family pass straight through, but calls from unwelcome callers are rejected without the householder's phone ever ringing. trueCall "learns" which calls are welcome and those that are not.

trueCall has worked so effectively in trials that the inventors are now talking to major manufacturers about building trueCall features directly into telephones.

trueCall costs £99 and is available directly from www.amazon.co.uk or www.trueCall.co.uk

Voice of Concern

Responses to their survey demonstrated the impact that silent calls were having on some peoples lives:-

- "Silent calls are to me a form of mental torture. I am alone most nights as husband works nights. These calls are by far the worse. I'm 51, if I were older I dread to think of the effects these calls could have"
- "I wonder if it's a person checking up to see if anyone's at home before attempting a burglary. Sometimes I think it could be a friend who had an accident who needs help but can not speak"
- "It's the not knowing who's calling - is it someone checking to see if the house is vacant - is it to see if you are alone - does someone mean you harm - are people out to get you? You be on your own at night time and get several of these calls in one night"
- "Fear that it might be an offensive call or a family member too ill to speak needing help"
- "It could be someone being vindictive. Expecting it to be malicious makes me anxious"

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

For further information on interview with either John Price or Steve Smith, please contact Alex Wood on 07789 500 177 or awood@resonate.uk.com. Alternatively, please contact Amy Rackham on amy@resonate.uk.com or 0208 861 3893

MORI 2008 poll conducted across sample of 2,000 British adults aged 16 – 64 according to MRSA guidelines