



Vanishing Phone Customer Support Is Driving Us All Insane

人工客服难觅，逼疯用户

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Increasingly, companies large and small are making it difficult to **access** a real, live person when help is needed. Contact numbers are hard to find. Wait times to speak to an **operator** are long. Some phone lines are seemingly staffed entirely by robots, forcing you to go through menu after menu **in quest of** a live, real person. Or, increasingly, companies don't offer a telephone option at all.

大大小小的公司都让我们需要帮助的时候越来越难找到一个真实的、活生生的人。联系电话很难找到。与接线员通话的等待时间很长。一些电话线路似乎完全由机器人负责，迫使你按下一个又一个菜单键，才能找到一个真人客服。或者，越来越多的公司根本不提供电话服务。

This is not simply inconvenient. It's **contemptuous**. And consumers pay the price in emotional **aggravation**, in precious time and in literal money, as people give up on legitimate financial claims because they are unable to **surmount** the barriers in their way.

这不仅仅是个不方便，这是蔑视。消费者受了气，还浪费了宝贵的时间和实实在在的金钱，因为人们由于无法克服障碍而放弃了对金钱的合法索赔。

"It's an absolute disaster," says Abraham Seidmann, a professor of information systems at Boston University's Questrom School of Business. "It's a major **abdication** of corporate responsibility."

"这绝对是一场灾难，"波士顿大学凯斯特罗姆商学院信息系统教授亚伯拉罕·塞德曼说。"这是对企业责任的重大放弃。"

Companies say they are reducing options for human

440 Words

access ['ækses] *v.* 获取，访问；接近，进入 *n.* 通道；（使用或见到的）机会，权利 | Users can access their voice mail remotely. 用户可以远程获取语音邮件。

operator ['ɑ:pəreitər] *n.* 电话接线员；操作人员；经营者；精明的人，善于摆布他人的人

in quest of sth. 寻找某物

contemptuous [kən'temptʃuəs] *adj.* 轻蔑的，鄙视的 | He was contemptuous of everything I did. 他看不起我做的一切。

aggravation [ægrə'veɪʃn] *n.* 激怒，心烦；恼人的事；加剧，恶化 | The cost of repairs was huge, not to mention the aggravation. 修理的花费巨大，更不用说让人心烦了。

surmount [sə'rmaʊnt] *v.* 克服，解决；处于……上面，置于……顶端 | I realized I had to surmount the language barrier. 我意识到我不得不克服语言障碍。

abdication [ˌæbdɪ'keɪʃən] *n.* 放弃；退位，辞职 | There had been a complete abdication of responsibility. 曾有个彻底推卸责任的情况。

virtual ['vɜ:rtʃuəl] *adj.* 虚拟的；事实上的，实际上的 | The website

contact by popular demand. They claim customers often prefer a **virtual** option — so said Frontier Airlines after it recently ceased offering customers access to live phone agents, directing them to text, chatbot or email instead. But as the *Wall Street Journal* noted late last year, Frontier is **simultaneously** telling its investors that call centers are “expensive,” while use of chatbots **eliminates** the customer’s ability to **negotiate**.

公司表示，他们正在根据大众需求减少与人接触的选项。他们声称，客户通常更喜欢虚拟的选项——美国边疆航空公司也这么说，它最近停止向客户提供实时电话客服，而是引导他们通过短信、聊天机器人或电子邮件来代替。但正如《华尔街日报》去年末所指出的那样，边疆航空公司同时告诉投资者，呼叫中心“很费钱”，而聊天机器人的使用则让客户无法与公司谈判。

All of this is, for the most part, excuse-making. If there are humans **clamoring** to end customer contact, it’s the ones in the **c-suite**, where the **suits** are happy to save a few pennies on call services **at your expense**.

所有这些在很大程度上都是在找借口。如果有人嚷嚷着要切断与客户的联系，那肯定是那些高管，他们很乐意以牺牲你的利益为代价，在电话服务上节省几分钱。

A survey by OnePoll in 2021 found that more than two-thirds of respondents ranked speaking to a human representative as one of their preferred methods of interacting with a company, while 55 percent identified the ability to reach a human as the most important **attribute** a customer service department can possess. “When people are anxious or have problems, they really, really want to talk,” says Michelle Shell, a **visiting** assistant professor also at the Questrom school. “You need human contact.”

OnePoll 公司在 2021 年进行的一项调查发现，超过三分之二的受访者把与真人代表交谈列为他们与公司沟通的首选方法之一，而 55% 的人认为与人交流的能力是客户服务部门可以拥有的最重要的品质。“当人们感到

allows you to take a virtual tour of the art gallery. 这个网站可让你对美术馆作一番虚拟参观。

simultaneously [ˌsaɪmlɪˈteɪəslɪ] *adv.* 同时地，同步地 | The game will be broadcast simultaneously on TV and radio. 比赛将同时在电视和电台转播。

eliminate [ɪˈlɪmɪneɪt] *v.* 清除，消除；淘汰；消灭 | Fatty foods should be eliminated from the diet. 饮食中应该避免摄入高脂肪食物。

negotiate [niˈɡoʊʃieɪt] *v.* 谈判，协商；顺利通过 | We have been negotiating for more pay. 我们一直在为增加工资进行协商。

clamor (=clamour) [ˈklæməɹ] *v.* 大声（或吵闹）地要求 *n.* 喧闹声，嘈杂声 | All his friends were clamouring to know where he’d been. 所有的朋友都吵着问他去了哪里。

c-suite *n.* 最高管理层，高管[公司的最高领导层 CEO, CFO, COO 等人的 title 都以 C (chief) 打头，所以统称为 C-suite]

suit [su:t] *n.* 管理人员，高级经理；西装，套装

at sb’s expense 以牺牲……的利益为代价；由……付费

attribute [əˈtrɪbjʊ:t] *n.* 属性，特征 *v.* 把……归因于；认为……出自 | Peter had all the attributes of a first-class athlete. 彼得拥有一流运动员应具备的所有特质。

焦虑或遇到问题时，他们非常非常想倾诉，”同样来自凯斯特罗姆商学院的客座助理教授米歇尔·谢尔说。“你需要与人接触。”

None of this to say is that it's always necessary to speak to a human. It's easy enough to make a restaurant reservation online. But we need a human touch when things go wrong. We want help, not to spend hours looking for a useful phone number or **navigating** endless phone trees.

这并不是说与人交谈总是必要的。在网上订餐厅很容易，但出现问题时，我们需要与人接触。我们需要帮助，而不是花几个小时找一个有用的电话号码或者没完没了地按键转接。

The difficulty of reaching humans for customer support is an **imposition** on both our time and our finances, forcing us to spend what can be hours of labor — sometimes known as **shadow work** or a time tax — to resolve what should be simple problems. And it's not so unreasonable to say we deserve better than that.

难以获得人工客服支持对我们的时间和金钱来说都是一种负担，迫使我们花费数小时的劳动——有时被称为影子工作或时间税——来解决本来很简单的问题。我们完全有理由说我们应该得到更好的服务。

visiting ['vɪzɪtɪŋ] *adj.* (指教授或讲师) 客座的

navigate ['nævɪɡeɪt] *v.* 导航；航行；找到正确方法（对付困难复杂的情况） | A solicitor will help you navigate the complex legal system. 会有一位律师来帮助你应对错综复杂的司法制度。

imposition [ˌɪmpə'zɪʃn] *n.* 不公平（或不合理）的要求；实施，推行 | Expecting employees to work longer hours for the same pay is a huge imposition. 希望员工延长工作时间却不加薪是极不合理的要求。

◇ 背景知识

shadow work

影子工作，包括全部无偿工作，例如家务活。最近该术语扩展到公司通过技术转嫁给客户的各种工作。过去这些任务通常由他人为我们完成，但如今我们需要借助数字设备自行完成，包括从银行业务办理到旅行预订、在餐馆点餐等。

