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From: "John R. Covert 30-Nov-1989 0343" <covert@covert.enet.dec.com>
Subject: Re: AT&T Operator Handling of International D.A.

>The way to implement and administer DA on an international basis is the way
>it is done here in the USA:

>Dial country code + city code + 555-1212. Let the gateway switches
>translate that into an actual number, just as '611', '411', '911' and
>'800-xxx-yyyy' are presently translated into whatever number(s) they ring
>into.

>You tell me why it wouldn't work. PT]

I'd like to have direct access to international D.A., but there are a number of problems, many of which are not under the control of any single body:

1. Country code + city code + 555-1212 isn't always available. In Sydney, Oz, it happens to be someone's valid phone number. This is certainly true in many other places.
2. Sometimes it's too long. The city code for Rimpar, Germany, is 9365. +49 9365 555-1212 is more digits than our local exchanges can handle.

The above two problems could be handled by some other numbering scheme. As I said, I'd like to see direct access, but that's not the end of the story.

3. We can't force our culture on other countries. D.A. operators there do not expect calls from customers. They are in the business of only supporting other operators. We're lucky in the U.S. that AT&T will even call overseas to get local assistance. In Europe, international D.A. (and national D.A. for that matter) is provided by centralized operating centers (which often take a loooong time to answer). They have telephone books (really, I kid you not) for almost the whole world. Only when they don't have the book (no matter how out of date the one they have is), do they maybe make the call for you.

By international agreement, these operators only accept calls from other operators, who are supposed to be trained to speak carefully, to ask only the pertinent questions, to have all the information available when the operator answers, to use phonetic alphabets when necessary, and all sorts of things that you or I would do, but not Joe Sixpack.

Our directory assistance system is much better. But it's our system, not theirs.

4. More culture problems. D.A. operators in some countries will extend the

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call to the called party after providing the number. Remember, they are used to an operator being on the line. We can't change the culture in other countries.

/john

From: "Berlin S. Moore" <bm24+@andrew.cmu.edu>
Subject: Re: AT&T Operator Handling of International D.A.

As a former AT&T International Operator, I would like to respond to your article. One reason that the operators here take the caller's information and pass it to the foreign operator is that frustrated American customers have a tendency to be abusive to the foreign operators. Once you get them mad, they become very uncooperative to all Americans.

Given that, then, it makes sense to take all the details before trying to establish the connection with directory assistance. You can't hold up an international circuit while an American operator gets the details from the local customer. If you have been having a particularly hard time obtaining a number, ask your operator for the service assistant. Sometimes they can expedite things for you. Also ask for the service assistant when you have a particularly incompetent operator on the line.

That operator can be singled out for special training. On the other hand, don't forget to ask for the service assistant to commend an operator when you get particularly good service. Pittsburgh International Operating Center is still alive & well, but they mainly only handle difficult calls now that the local operators can't handle, such as High Seas calls, & calls to hard-to-reach places like Afghanistan.

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