

Once upon a time (28th June 2008)

Once upon a time, there were lots of small companies growing bigger due to the expansion of the economy.

After a few years, they who must be obeyed, decided that it was more efficient if they all worked together within their little sectors, so the likes of British Rail, British Waterways, the Post Office, British Telecom, The Water, Gas and Electricity Boards many others were formed over a period.

Things moved on and they who must be obeyed, decided that these large organisations should be broken up into smaller bits to allow 'competition'.

Reality meant that they just 'divided' into smaller 'business units'. Others, like the railways, gas and electricity suppliers, were sold as infrastructure and operators. The likes of the water companies ended up as regional operators, so little changed.

The Post Office, Royal Mail and British Telecom ended up as 'national monopoly', but open to competition. Private operators have been allowed to 'cream off' the profitable bits and everyone wonders why profits are down for the incumbent organisations.

The reason for this 'background' is that I have been a 'victim' of these changes and how much more efficient it is now than it used to be.

For many years, I have been provided with a service. When things have gone wrong (as they do), the problem is usually resolved easily. A few years ago, we had a real problem and several people came to resolve it without success. One Sunday, a man arrived and announced he wasn't to leave until it was fixed. Fix it he did after a few hours and came to announce that the problem was elsewhere and was resolved. He was right!

Then this organisation underwent an internal reorganisation and even obtained EN9001 (paperwork trail) in an effort to meet the 'competition' requirements. So far, so good!

If you are keeping up? Without realising the full implications of these 'improvements', I changed my service from one department to another without understanding that joined up working was not high on their list. Department A started my service and instructed billing to send an invoice. Department B terminated my service and instructed billing to issue a credit invoice. Customer (me), paid the difference between the invoice and credit and all was well.

Then department A decided that I hadn't paid my bill and terminated the service (and bits also provided by others!). When questioned, they just kept repeating that the invoice hadn't been paid and they don't talk to department B - then transferred me!

Department B say they can't transfer the credit to A, but can send a cheque to me - in 10 days or so. Back to A who appreciate the problem.

Next day a letter arrives from A, saying that I owe them some money and should pay within the week to avoid being 'terminated'. Back onto A to ask what is going on. A mistake has been made, they suggest, and we will reconnect the service - only it appears it has been disconnected (remember the fixed fault a few paragraphs back?), so nothing can be done for a few days (we are now on day 6). The refund from B arrives from the 'group' account - those who have nothing to do with each other. By day 10, we have a service of sorts and by day 13 the basic service is working apart from the 'add on' bits which have to be reordered as new due to being 'terminated'. Wait until they get their hands on ID cards!

The name of this organisation? BT.

So if you had trouble contacting me in June, now you know why!