

Cowboy Up!
By Ron Wilson, Poet Lariat

VoiceJail

VoiceJail. Do you know what that is? No, I didn't say VoiceMail. VoiceMail is a way to retrieve your phone messages. VoiceJail is a term for when you are stuck in a process of entering numbers on the phone in response to automated, robotic prompts.

For example: Let's say I call Corporation X or Big Bank Y. I get a prerecorded message which gives me several options, and I start pushing buttons on my telephone keypad depending on what I need. (Press 1 for hours, press 2 for billing questions, and so forth.) I might even get to choose the language in which I get these messages. (I have yet to hear "Cowboy" as one of the language options, such as: "To hear this message in Cowboy, press Howdy...")

I'm sure these automated systems are good for the big corporations because it directs the calls more efficiently, but I have started calling these systems VoiceJail because it seems I get trapped in them. There seem to be three consistent themes from the VoiceJail systems I call: 1) My call is very important to them, 2) their options have recently changed, and 3) this call may be recorded for quality assurance purposes. (I remember eventually reaching a live person after one exasperatingly long wait and informing her that I certainly hoped this call was being recorded for quality assurance purposes, because I thought the quality was lousy. Another time, when I was asked for my account number by every operator to which I was transferred, I informed them that it hadn't changed in the two minutes since the last one asked me. Sorry for being rude.)

Part of my problem is that I'm not smart enough to figure out the system, or my question doesn't fit the system. I'm supposed to pick 1 for this and pick 2 for that, but too often my question doesn't fit either one. (Is there a "none of the above" button?) It all adds to the frustration of dealing with big companies and talking to machines.

Contrast all of the above with my local, community bank. When I call this bank, I get a live person who is friendly and who can quickly direct me to the person I need.

Not only that, my community bank has a loan officer who knows and appreciates agriculture first-hand. He gets it. He really understands the nuances and challenges of this unique business and lifestyle that we call farm and ranch living. Let's be thankful for all our ag bankers and our locally owned businesses.

If you have any feedback on this column, just give me a call. Press 1 for suggestions, press 2 for compliments, press 3 for a directory....

The Banker who Gets It
In honor of L. B. and other ag lenders
by Ron Wilson, Poet Lariat

In this time of bailouts and mega-bank corporations,
There's a special person who deserves our commendations.
He's our local ag banker, a wonderful man,
Who is worthy of praise whenever we can.

He knows about finance and mortgage lending,
And the federal regulations which are never ending.
He knows the banking business inside and out,
But that's not what makes me praise him all about.

What really makes me give him praise
Is his special knowledge of farm and ranch ways.
This banker knows farm life first-hand,
In a way big-city bankers don't understand.

Our ag banker knows about daily chores
Or searching for a calf while a rainstorm pours.
He knows the satisfaction of bringing harvest in,
Or gettin' a full count of cattle in a roundup pen.

He knows the joy of father and son working together,
And the pain of adverse markets or weather.
For a real estate auction, he will understand
The importance of owning that adjoining land.

He might ride a horse or string a fence.
Paperwork's not his first preference.
He knows the value of farm-city unity,
And the importance of a bank in rural community.

So while the big banker sits in a corporate office somewhere,
The ag banker's workin' with his customers right there.
Let's give a hearty vote of thanks
To our local ag bankers at our community banks.

Happy Trails!
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