

Technical Troubleshooting at AT&T Yahoo for Fun, Profit and Sheer Adventure

It's not that AT&T is a small company. Neither is Yahoo. My webhosting says AT&T Yahoo, so that should make matters simple. My monthly billings are exquisitely accurate as any charge possible anywhere throughout the AT&T Yahoo mega system finds its way to my invoice. Be that as it may the blog was down and no amount of fidgeting or rebooting would help. The problem had to be on the computer cloud side, that is, with the website software and not my harddrive. The first call got me to AT&T but no website. They gave me a new number. The next call made me listen to all the options before making my selection. This was obviously some techie's whopper idea of the week to reduce mis-categorized inquiries and make us have to listen to all the options. 'If you have webhosting and are a Red Sox fan, press 9.' "Wrong department," replied the pleasant voice on the other end, "why did they give you that number?" "Great question," was my reply, "it would have saved me time if they would have just told me first up they were giving me the wrong number. Could you please forward me to that number?" "Sorry, sir," was the reply, "we can't do that but here is the new number." This was sure disappointing. My AT&T Yahoo bill is all connected but the rest of the company is not. As it turns out neither could even forward calls internally. The menu maze was obviously an obstacle course to weed out the weak, frail and mentally challenged. Ten minutes later: "Yahoo," said the voice. "Great," was my relief, "my blog is down." "Can you get into the control panel?" "Yes, but not to post new entry or entries. An error message comes back." "Give me a few minutes sir and let me check it. Please hold" Now we were getting somewhere. What is amazing is how many departments in AT&T Yahoo have something to do with websites but not the website itself. My suspicion was most staff were in marketing and sales. 15 minutes later came the reply. "Sir, we are getting error messages too but it looks like it's on the software side. There doesn't look like there is much we can do..." Pause. "Golly, maybe I was hoping for a little too much; afterall, it's your software, your webhosting and it is technically beyond my capabilities to troubleshoot your software." "Good point sir. I'm going to speak with my immediate tech supervisor and get his opinion. Please hold." So far so good though to some it might look otherwise. They acknowledged there was a problem and they can duplicate it although initially it was unclear just whose responsibility this was. They must get thousands of calls from buffoons that can't push the right key; at least on their AT&T Yahoo internal customer routing software program they would not put me under the 'buffoon' category. At least not yet. And ten minutes later... "Sir, we are looking at shutting down the site and restarting it but we want to make sure we don't lose your data." "Thanks. It means a lot to me. That and the fact there are hundreds of thousands of words and that blog mean a lot to me too." "Sir, we can't determine why you are having this problem from where we are. Can I have your user name and password?" Sure. Why not? The good news is even they have trouble hacking into a site they host. Ten minutes later... "Sir, this is an engineering problem and we are forwarding it to them for review. Please stay on the line and we appreciate your patience." Sounds good to me as we are only into this process a bit over an hour and what the heck could be more fun than doing this? "Sir, the engineering department said they can see no quick solution and will open a case number. Your case number is 6542345. Let me also get your phone and email address as well so they can get back to you. It might take 24 hours." "My phone and email? You folks sell me both, you should have some record somewhere." "Thank you sir and they will be in touch with you." And there it sat. Me with a case number like it's some trial or deposition. There were two things that were abundantly clear to me at this point in this tech troubleshooting process. The first is that even if AT&T and Yahoo are world class companies that does not necessarily mean that they can communicate with each other about things other than my invoice. The second is that Yahoo is a company that the week before had turned down an offer of a \$45 billion dollar buy out by rival Microsoft. Go figure. But no worries. The engineers were hard at work looking into my problem. With positive signs like a case number hopefully they were beginning to realize it was their problem too. A half hour later on a hunch I tried my blog and "voila!"; it worked! So you may be thinking this guy is a whiner and why does he need a blog anyway? Good points and you may in fact be right. But you miss the point. You see, my experience proved that AT&T and Yahoo are in it for themselves and collecting my money is their first priority. As true blue capitalists, they feel that getting my money is at times more important than my having a meaningful experience when dealing with a techie issue. So in fact one comes to the conclusion that the company cultures of Yahoo and AT&T are so unidimensional that they will never change and were it not for their people, they would crumble into digital cyber dust. What saved me were the string of polite, knowledgeable employees that despite the absurdity of the systems they were working under, were able to work around that and get my problem solved. But that still does not explain why Yahoo did not take that \$45 billion when they had the chance.

About the Author

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