

Relay

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:

You're a fat piece of shit and you wear a tampon to catch the steak drippings oozing out of your pussy.

You're sitting at home and you get a phone call like that. You're sitting at home when the phone rings and you pick up to hear, This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message: I'm going to burn your house down while you sleep inside.

Maybe you're eating lunch and then you got up to hear something about the size of your penis.

More likely, the phone next to the bed rings out in the dark and you start reaching for it with your eyes closed. You answer with a tired hello and hear, This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message: Wake up, fucker!

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If you work at IRQ you might relay around 75 calls a day. If you work here, you might dial quickly to maintain the company standard of one call every 4.38 minutes.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
Kill yourself.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
You are an ugly man.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
You dress like a fag.

If you're really good and keep up the pace, that averages out to breaking 13.69 hearts an hour.

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When you first started here someone would have explained the service to you. What they would have told you is that it was designed to allow deaf or hearing-impaired persons to use the telephone for the first time. You would have pictured yourself sitting at a desk, helping someone call home to say he was running late. When you first started, the person training you would have said that privacy was one-hundred-percent, and you would have seen yourself sitting up straight and calmly relaying to a stockbroker that it was time to sell as soon as possible. The person training you would have explained that every message must be repeated, verbatim, no matter what. You would be thinking that maybe

some people were too embarrassed to say to a stranger, I love you, or to say, Our baby just said his first word. But you like that stuff. You pictured that it would be like working in a flower shop, passing on the small personal messages of strangers.

When your first call came in, the message on the screen made you take off your headset and signal the floor manager. You were half-standing from your office chair, still stuck to the computer by the short umbilical of your headset. The floor manager walked over and shielded his eyes with a manila folder. What is it? he said. You started to explain the message and he stopped you, reminded you of the privacy policy. You said maybe there's some mistake. You were looking at the people sitting on either side of you, wondering what they would do when they heard their new cubicle neighbor call someone a cocksucker.

On one side of you an older woman. You only saw the back half of her head, graham cracker color hair in an old lady ball of curls. On the other side, a thin black man with round glasses. You never really hear anything they're saying.

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This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
Tom, this is Cindy. It's over. I didn't know how else to tell you. Sorry. You're really great, you know.

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Something else they didn't tell you was that so many of the calls would be made on behalf of users from other countries.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
Hello, my name is Roy Graham.

People let their guard down when they think a deaf person has gone to all this trouble to call them. This is especially true of old people.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
I normally make a decent living from my veteran's benefits.

They think they're talking to a poor guy who was deafened in one war or another.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
If I can borrow five-hundred it will free up my late wife's estate.

And as if that's not bad enough, this poor deaf gentleman needs five-hundred dollars to pay bank fees and free up the million he's got in the bank.

This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
Things have been difficult since Edith passed.

It's your voice on the phone telling people this.

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When you ask too many questions the manager assigns you an ELO. Extended Learning Opportunity. ELO's occur on Friday at 5 P.M., outside the normal work week. An ELO is not a punishment. An ELO is paid time. You are required to wear a tie to every ELO. You are required to attend every minute of the ELO session. If you are late, you must sign up for the next two sessions. The best employees do fewer ELO's because they already understand the principles. The worst employees attend ELO's more frequently.

Your ELO is on a Friday afternoon when it is raining and dark. You would like to leave, not because you want to be in the rain but because it's nice to be home with the rain tapping on the window. Your ELO is a Yes/No test. All of the scenarios are different, but there are only two possible answers. Yes, I think that it would be appropriate to go against the privacy policy in this instance. Or No, I do not think it would be appropriate.

I'm coming to kill you.

I put a bomb in a local elementary school.

I have sexual intercourse with children and will do it again.

You are supposed to answer No, No, No. If you do not answer No, No, No you will be forced to explain to the other employees in the ELO why you felt it was okay to violate the privacy policy. This is not your first ELO. You write No, No, No. One woman in the class writes No, No, Yes. She stands in front of the class and says it's wrong not to protect a child. The instructor says that the content of the message is none of her concern. The woman says it is wrong and that it's wrong to help someone who is doing bad things to children. The instructor says that she's judging a man who is maybe relaying the last line of a movie script, or maybe he is just repeating something for a legal case. The point is, you can't know. The woman is standing in front of all of us. She is wearing her best dress, which looks very silly. It might be a bridesmaid's dress or a prom dress. You can't be sure. She says, Maybe someone needs to listen and these things won't happen again and again.

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This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
You are a pussy.

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You don't know any deaf people. You don't see deaf people signing left and right. The few times you did, you watched their hands fly up around their faces, and waterfall back down, watched their heads nod with the words. You always thought you could maybe learn at least Hello or Thank You, but you never have.

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This is IRQ Relay Operator 1134 with a message:
Your mom got the nicest tits.

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ADA rules mean that every call must be totally private. ADA rules mean phone companies have absolutely no way of knowing what percentage of calls are pranks. You aren't allowed to say. If you were allowed to say, which you are not, you would say 90%.

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After you tell an old man to fuck himself, you pull the list from your desk drawer.

Good Things:

- Salary
- Health Insurance
- Indoor, comfortable
- Telecommuting once a week
- Boss is nice
- Loose dress code
- Never called anyone you knew

There are a lot of things that can end you up in an ELO, you discover. You can end up in an ELO for purposely hanging up and setting yourself to the back of the autodialer queue. You can end up in an ELO for allowing a phone to ring for three hours before giving up on the call. You can end up in an ELO when one of your cubicle neighbors hears you say, I'm so sorry. The ELO's teach you that it's wrong to put yourself in the back of the queue because that means someone has to do your work for you. You learn that it's wrong to stay on the line with the phone ringing and ringing because wasting time is the same as stealing from the company. You learn that you must always stick to the script no matter what the person says on the other line. If they ask questions, all you can say is, This is a relay call and it will be terminated in four seconds. You are paid for ELO's and you are happy to be off the lines, even if it means you spend Friday afternoons in a classroom being lightly chastised for not calling an old woman a cunt.