

## The Cabbie and the Class Action Lawsuit

Written by David Daly

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“Call centres? Don’t talk to me about call centres!”

Oh dear. 8.15 am. I’d been up since five. I’d had a terrible flight, with some very happy people behind me talking loudly and laughing incessantly. I had just fallen asleep when the captain woke me up (speaker right above my head) to announce how high up we were, how fast we were going and when we would land. I needed a decent cup of coffee. It was a miserable, wet morning when I landed. And then, in my haze, I happened to use the words ‘call’ and ‘centre’ in the same sentence when the cabbie asked me what I did for a living.

So the rant started. A list of his gripes with call centres, and particularly his bank’s centre. And then I made a fatal mistake – I tried to appeal to his wallet.

“Well, if you want personal service, you’ll have to pay more...”. It was a dumb strategy in retrospect, but the best I could come up with in my state.

“I’d happily pay more if I got a decent service”, he shot back. (Yeah, sure he would.) “What we need is a class action lawsuit against these centres, you know, where a load of people get together and sue them. Then they’ll stand up and take notice.” The anti-call centre monologue continued and I just gave up. I was glad of the glass partition between us - who knows what frustrated action it prevented?

It’s not that I’m particularly sensitive about criticism of our industry. Sure, things go wrong, but people such as my taxi driver seem to focus on one of these rather than the many positive experiences they’ve had. Like every industry it has its problems and bad practitioners – my own bank being one of those that needs to up its game. But it is also a major employer in this country – more than one in thirty people now work in the sector - and the starting point for many a successful career. It has helped rejuvenate economically depressed areas of the country. It is increasingly contributing to the economies of lesser developed countries - I was recently told that as many as 125 countries now provide call centre services of some sort to UK clients. And as a user, it saves me an inordinate amount of time writing letters, or having to go into town to undertake some personal business. The integration of the web with call centres has made life even better. I have come to love live chat as a service for answering or solving my queries - it’s just brilliant!

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So let's hear it for the contact centre industry - over a million people and counting in the UK alone, successfully handling countless millions of calls, emails, texts, webforms, letters and other communications every day.

And as for taxi drivers – don't talk to me about taxi drivers! I wonder did he realise he was the first cabbie in about the last five years who didn't get a tip from me. How's that for class inaction?