



Get past the phone menu runaround

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YC man cuts through call options to find real humans

By Kyle Buis/Appeal-Democrat

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If you want sales, press 1. If you want customer service, press 2. If you want to speak to a live human being, good luck.

Gabe Davidson was tired of wading through a sea of phone menu options when he was dealing with banks, so he spent hours searching the Internet for shortcuts and testing them. Now he's putting that work on the Internet for people to find for free.

"I was calling this bank, which I won't name, but I was on hold forever," he said. "I thought it would be great to have a list of extensions and numbers so I wasn't sitting here waiting."

The 33-year-old Yuba City real estate agent has compiled more than 400 phone numbers of companies and government organizations on his site, www.1800shortcuts.net. While the majority of the numbers are 1-800 numbers, some aren't toll-free.

The site can help save time as well as money.

Most companies have some kind of back door in their automated phone systems to immediately get in contact with a live person. Most of these have been scattered on the Internet or hidden in obscurity, waiting for someone to pry through the system to find them. A lot of the shortcuts that Davidson found came by process of elimination.

"You get a feel for it after awhile," he said.

Most phone systems use the star key to repeat the machine's messages, the pound key leads to customer service, and hitting zero multiple times can lead to a live operator, Davidson said. From there, he scoured the Internet and began testing ideas for hundreds of phone numbers.

"There was a lot of research and a lot of dialing," he said.

The Web site itself is much simpler than the process of culling the information. Instead of overloading it with ads and graphics and layers, Davidson has every phone number on one page. It's just text, a simple Google ad and a small logo at the top.



Gabe Davidson of Yuba City started a Web site – [1800shortcuts.net](http://www.1800shortcuts.net) – after he got tired of spending his day calling corporate phone numbers and working his way through automated phone systems to get to a live person.

"It was fun for me to deal with the steps of getting it all together and putting together the site," he said. "The hardest part was just coming up with the initial idea."

Davidson has some technology experience, though he didn't study it specifically. He's worked for Century 21 for the past four years and before that he was involved in computer sales.

The site is far from complete and Davidson is trying to add more companies and phone numbers to his list.

If people have tips for how to get around more phone systems or want to report a mistake, he said the best option is to e-mail him at info@1800shortcuts.net

"It's a simple concept and I want it to be a useful tool for people to use," Davidson said. "And before anyone asks: no, the site is not for sale."

Appeal-Democrat reporter Kyle Buis can be reached at 741-2400. E-mail him at kbus@appealdemocrat.com

American Red Cross
With winter still ahead - typically the busiest season for the emergency services for the Sacramento Chapter, which covers Sutter, Yuba, Butte, and emergency lodging for families that are left without re-homes that is \$5,000. September also saw an unusual number of residential fires. The local chapter served a state Red Cross shelter in Sacramento. The names of residents turn to RED CROSS /

Gabe Davidson of Yuba City started a Web site - 1800shortcuts.net - after he got tired of spending his day calling corporate phone numbers and waiting to get through to a live person. He's compiled more than 400 phone numbers of businesses and agencies with shortcuts to get to a live person.

Get past the phone menu runaround

YC man cuts through call options to find real humans

Story and photo by Kyle Buis
Associated Press

If you want sales, press 1. If you want customer service, press 2. If you want to hang up, press five.

Gabe Davidson was tired of waiting on hold for hours on menu options while he was dealing with business, so he spent hours searching the Web for ways to get around testing them. Now he's putting that work on the Internet for people to find for him.

"I was calling the bank, which I usually do, and I was getting hung up forever," he said. "I thought it would be great to have a way to get around those options so I wasn't sitting here waiting."

The 35-year-old Yuba City resident whose wife has compiled more than

400 phone numbers of companies and government organizations on his site, www.1800shortcuts.net. While most of the companies have 1-800 numbers, some aren't toll-free.

The site can help save time as well.

Most companies have automated menus that lead back door in their automated phone systems to live persons. Most of those have been scattered on the Internet or have been passed along by word of mouth. Davidson found some by process of elimination.

"You get a feel for it after awhile," he said.

Most phone systems use the star key to repeat the machine's message, the pound key leads to customer service, and the asterisk key multiple times can lead to a live service, Davidson said. From there, he would have to start calling, testing ideas for hundreds of phone numbers.

"There was a lot of research and a lot of trial and error," he said.

The Web site itself is much simpler than the process of calling companies and getting around using it with ads and graphics and layers, Davidson has every phone number listed with a direct link to a simple Google Ad and a small logo at the end of each entry.

"It was fun for me to deal with the steps of getting it all together and putting together the site," he said. "The hardest part was just coming up with the initial idea."

Davidson has some technology experience, though he didn't study it specifically. He's worked for Century 21 for the past four years and before that he was involved in computer sales.

"The site is far from complete and Davidson is trying to add more companies and phone numbers to his list.

VOLUNTEER OF THE WEEK

By Kim Fox
Associated Press

Webelos troop, so my wife and I volunteer.

teach your children the importance of giving back to the community.

ON THE NET

www.1800shortcuts.net

■ A sampling of companies' phone numbers and shortcuts to a live person:

- AT&T, 800-222-4327; Press 0 after the beep
- Columbia Mutual Funds, 800-345-2222; Press 1 after the beep
- GEICO, 800-747-3000; Press 6-1-5
- QVC, 800-367-9444; Press 0
- State Farm, 800-547-4788; Say "agent" repeatedly