

When Technology Fails

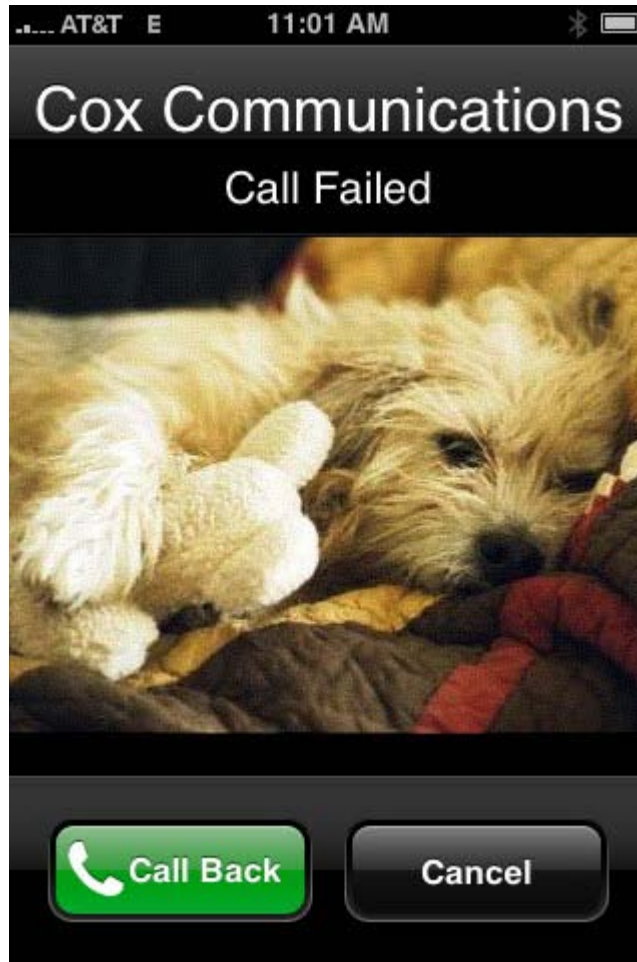
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In our hurried lives, many of us find new technology including all the flashing gadgets to be marvelous. But what happens to our lives when technology fails. We take so many thing in our lives for granted. You pick up the phone and you have dial tone. You turn on your computer and you assume there will be internet service. You need to call 911 and the call is placed and you are magically connected.

No Bars - No Service



This morning was one of those mornings that technology failed. I had several applications hang on my computer. This is not uncommon. In fact, it is almost a daily activity for me to hit Alt-Ctrl-Del followed by a message indicating the application is not responding and then followed by the "Tell Microsoft about this problem" prompt. I then noticed that I didn't have any Internet connectivity at all. I rebooted my computer and reset my cable modem, router, and VoIP modem. Still I had no Internet service and no phone service. I was frustrated. Perhaps more so than usual because I have lost phone service more times in the last year since I switched to Cox Communications digital phone service than I have lost dial tone in my entire life from traditional phone carriers. I grabbed my iPhone and placed a call to Cox Communications. To say the least, though the AT&T map on the web indicates that there is excellent coverage at my home, I generally, at best, get "one bar" of signal strength in my area of central Phoenix, Arizona. My call doesn't go through so I go outside and stand in the middle of the street trying to get enough signal strength to call Cox. After multiple busy signals and redials, I finally got through to an automated attendant. The automated attendant was attempting to request information as to my phone number and reason for calling. After repeated attempts with typical poor cell phone audio quality, it finally indicated to me that "it understands" I would like to speak to an agent. It then starts prompting me with additional options and the call connections drops completely. I stormed out of the middle of the street and into my house. The technology is useless. An hour later, I still have no Internet or phone service and I have my measly one bar of signal strength from AT&T with only Edge data connectivity.



With all the hype with the TV commercials claiming fantastic service, the technology left me completely unconnected. Well, it took several hours but my Cox Internet Service and phone service has returned. I am not sure how many times I can tolerate such failures. I am ready to convert back to POTS service with Qwest Communications for my phone. The reliability of the VoIP service is just too poor. In time I wish that I would have more options such as cable from more than one provider. I am also hoping that the iPhone will become available on the Verizon network. I have had excellent coverage at my home with them in the past. When I first got home with my iPhone and realized the AT&T service was poor, I called the AT&T store. The employee that I spoke to suggested that I turn in my iPhone for a phone that was "more responsive" to their network. Something that I wasn't about to do.

My point is that we have allowed ourselves to become so dependent on technology that our lives and our jobs come to a standstill when it fails. Hopefully future technology will give us more options. Whether it is Wi-Max, metro-wide Wi-Fi, fixed wireless or even multiple cable providers, the user needs more options to avoid single point of failure in their communications.