



## Me and my hang-ups

Beware: cold callers can expect some phone rage

I was at the cinema, halfway through a riveting movie, when my phone started vibrating. I looked down but didn't recognise the number. Still, curiosity got the better of me and I ducked outside to phone the mystery caller back.

There was no answer but there was a voicemail. "Hi Bill, this is Leanne, we just want to offer you some Sunshine Coast accommodation ..." I hung up immediately.

Bill? Bill?!? Hate that. If you're a marketing person cold calling someone, get their name right, at least. I found it interesting that when I had rung back though, there was no answer.

It reminded me of a *Seinfeld* episode in which a marketing person phones Jerry at home only to have the tables turned.

"I'm a bit busy right now but give me your home number and I can phone you back," Jerry says [I'm paraphrasing], but the marketing man declines. "Oh, so you don't like to be called at home either?" Jerry says. Touche.

In another episode, someone rings Jerry and asks if he'd like a subscription to *The New York Times*. Jerry

says "Yes, I would," and then hangs up. I like his style, although these days I usually skip the chitchat and go straight for the hang-up.

I'm tired of being phoned by strangers at the most inopportune times. I mean, there I am, in the kitchen with my George Foreman Lean Mean Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine full of snags, with potatoes to be mashed and a microwave beeping to tell me the other vegies are done when someone called Cindy (not her real name) from Mumbai or Bangalore calls asking if Mr Brown is there.

For a while, I used to take some delight in having what I figured was a jolly jape before slamming the phone down. My stock lines were: "No, he's just exploded", "I'm afraid he passed away several minutes ago", or "No, Mr Brown is on holiday in India, please give him my regards if you see him." These responses seemed to amuse my son, at least.

Nowadays, I am so attuned to the hang-up that sometimes I even hang up on bona fide callers whose voices I haven't recognised immediately. My apologies for that.

**Oh, so you don't like to be called at home either?**



When my mum complained about getting too many marketing calls, I suggested she go the hang-up too.

My brother, who lives in Canada and is prone to using a funny voice (often a character from *The Goon Show*) on the phone, has since been hung up on by mum because she thought he was someone from a call centre in a far-flung place.

There are times, however, when I don't hang up immediately: the evenings when I have a ticket in a Gold Lotto draw.

Fool that I am, I'm constantly expecting that phone call to tell me I am now a very rich man. I'm ready and waiting to take that call.



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