# Why 03 numbers are growing in popularity by Neil Barrall

Article published on February 23rd 2012 | Business

03 is the magic number! 03 numbers are rapidly replacing 08 numbers as the prefix of choice for a wide range of situations.

But whatâ€™s so special about them?

03 telephone numbers were introduced by Ofcom* in 2007 as an alternative to chargeable 08 numbers.

Originally, there were just three 08 prefixes with clear rates for calls from a BT landline:

>> 0800freephone (business pays the cost of the call)

>> 0845 local rate (caller pays the cost of the call)

>> 0870 national rate plus optional revenue share (caller pays the cost of the call and the business gets the rest)

It should have been simple!

However, 0870 numbers managed to get a bad reputation for themselves. Who wants to be â€˜on holdâ€™ to make a complaint to customer services knowing that the business is making money from your call while keeping you waiting? No-one! And that gave rise to websites such as saynoto0870. Unfortunately, the taint â€˜rubbed offâ€™ on other 08 numbers, with people suspicious that 0845 offered revenue share just as 0870 does. (By the way, it doesnâ€™t.)

Next, there was so much demand that new 08 numbers were released, including 0808, 0842, 0843, 0844, 0871, 0872 and 0873. No wonder users were confused about what they were paying for their calls!

And then another problem arose. â€˜Freephoneâ€™, â€˜localâ€™ and â€˜nationalâ€™ call rates donâ€™ phones, and many (if not most) calls are now made from mobiles.

Why did people choose 08 numbers in the first place?

03 and 08 phone numbers are Non Geographic Numbers or NGNs, that is, a phone number that can be diverted to any landline or mobile, anywhere in the UK.

The advantage of NGNs is that you and your team can make and take calls wherever you are, with your caller being none the wiser. They are particularly useful for sole traders and small businesses who want to appear larger than they are, anyone who travels as part of their job, and offices who use home workers.

So whatâ€™s the point of 03?

Itâ€™s long been known that offering a freephone number to clients increases the number of calls you get. In our research, a properly advertised 03 number will increase calls by as much as 25%! Hereâ€™s why:

>> 0300, 0330, 034x, 037x are charged at the same cost as dialling an 01 or 02 landline. Because calls from mobiles are usually included in the callerâ€™s mobile call package, many people call them â€˜freephone numbers for mobilesâ€™.

>> Note that revenue share is not allowed with 03 numbers, so callers can be confident that businesses are not making any extra money out of them!

Who uses 03 numbers?

03 numbers are already being used by the BBC â€˜Points of Viewâ€™ programme as well as by the RSPCA, DVLA and many other major UK organisations. We predict they are the future of all business numbers.

Who can use 0300 numbers?

Only charities, public bodies and non-profit organisations can use numbers in the 0300 range, that is, any number starting 0300 to 0309.

Who can use 033x numbers?

Numbers in the range from 0330 to 0339 are available to any individual or business.

Who can use 034x and 037x numbers?

If you already have an 084x or 087x number, you can migrate it to an 034x or 037x number i.e. 0845 numbers migrate to 0345, 0844 migrates to 0344, 0870 migrates to 0370 and 0871 migrates to 0371.

>> Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries.

Article Source:
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Article Keywords:
0845 numbers,Telecoms World PLC

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