

HYBRID TEAM DIAGNOSTIC · 2026

Why Nobody Answers the Main Number

Six complaints that arrive separately over two years, one shared cause, and an eight step afternoon that ends all six. For teams spread across home, office and the road.

Each complaint gets explained away on its own terms. A busy week. Someone being helpful. A habit. Listed together, the cause is obvious: **the team left the building and the phone system stayed behind**, taking with it four things the office had been providing free.

■ Six symptoms, and what is actually happening

What you hear	What it really is
"I rang last week and nobody picked up."	The main number rings one app instead of a room.
"I answer a lot of calls that are not mine."	No ring order and no timeout, so the fastest person becomes the receptionist.
"Just text me on my mobile, it is easier."	The directory is less convenient than the contacts app, so people route around the system.
"Is anyone free to take this?"	Presence was never configured, and the routing ignores it anyway.
"I explained all this to someone yesterday."	Context used to travel by being overheard. Now only if written down.
"The clients went with her when she left."	Three years of outbound calls presented a personal number.

Find your accidental receptionist in ten minutes

Pull **answered calls by person** for the last month. If the top name is more than double the second, you have one. They did not volunteer and it is not in their role. Their day fragments so their real work happens at night, and your front door is unattended the week they take leave. The fix is a ring strategy, not a conversation: rotate the order, ring everybody at once, or order by who is actually available. Asking people to answer more does nothing, because the person already answering everything is not the problem.

■ Policy will not fix personal mobiles. Convenience will

- People use the contacts app because it is one tap and they already know the number.
- If the system route is slower than the personal route, the personal route wins. Every time.
- No record, so nobody can reconstruct what was agreed. Matters in any audit, dispute or compliance obligation.
- The route belongs to the person, not the business. It cannot be revoked, redirected or covered on leave.
- It puts personal availability permanently on the line, which is what the right to disconnect exists to address.

■ The afternoon that fixes all six

- 1 Ring your own main number from an outside mobile at 8:35am, 1pm and 5:45pm. Write down what happens. Most businesses are surprised by at least one.
- 2 Pull answered calls by person for a month and find the accidental receptionist.
- 3 Rebuild the main number as a group with an order, a timeout, an overflow, and a defined end of the line.
- 4 Check outbound caller ID for everyone, by ringing a phone you can physically look at. Ten minutes each, highest value on the list.
- 5 Turn on automatic presence, agree each state in one sentence, and confirm the routing honours it.
- 6 Set business hours and public holidays, and define what happens outside them.
- 7 Register the right emergency address for everyone who works from home.
- 8 Ring every person and confirm it rings with the app closed and the device locked. Thirty seconds each.

■ Home call quality: check these

- Jitter first. Variation in delay is what breaks audio up.
- Latency. Past ~150ms people talk over each other.
- Packet loss. Clipped words. Usually wi-fi.
- Speed is nearly irrelevant. Voice uses very little bandwidth.

■ The two minute test

- Plug into the router with a cable, or sit within sight of it, and make one call.
- Nine reports in ten are wi-fi: distance, a neighbour on the same channel, a microwave, a mesh handover.
- The rest are contention, not shortage. A big upload or a backup running in the house.

Two things the law expects of a distributed team

Emergency calls. The operator gets the *registered* service address, and the network cannot know somebody is eleven kilometres away in a spare room. Register where people actually work, update it when they move, and tell staff to dial 000 from the handset's own dialler. **The right to disconnect** now covers small business employers. Hours belong on the business, not on individual willpower, and an after hours answer that genuinely deals with the customer does more than any policy to stop people picking up at 9pm.

Buy the headsets before anything else

A laptop microphone in a room with a hard floor makes a capable person sound careless, and it is the cheapest problem on this page to solve. The same applies to meeting rooms: the remote person's experience of a hybrid meeting is decided almost entirely by the room's microphone, and a laptop on a table is not one. It is the most reliably underspent item in hybrid working.