



TalkTalk blocks more than 11 million suspicious calls a month with a single solution

Their customers needed protection from malicious callers and scammers. TalkTalk wanted a unique answer. ECT pitched a solution... and won.

Our customer

TalkTalk is one of the big four ISPs in the United Kingdom, with more than 4 million subscribers. They are the value for money provider in the British market.

The obstacle they faced

TalkTalk customers were pestered by scam callers supposedly from TalkTalk or technology brands saying there were issues with their computers. Most of the time, the scams caused the victims to lose huge sums of money.

How we helped

ECT provided a virtualized solution implemented on TalkTalk's existing IT infrastructure that allowed them to reduce both capital and operational expenditures.

The challenge

Scammers on the rise

Scamming is a big problem in the UK (and, of course, the rest of the world). According to the



+ €50M

Unlawfully obtained by pension scammers between April 2014 and August 2017



-€360



One in every 10 victims ends up losing between €180 and €360



24% ↑

Tech-related scams growth from 2016 to 2017

British government, more than 43 million pounds (50M EUR) was unlawfully obtained by pension scammers between April 2014 and August 2017¹. At the same time, Microsoft reports that tech-related scams grew 24% from 2016 to 2017, and that one in every 10 victims ends up losing between 200 and 400 USD² (between 180 and 360 EUR). And that is just from known cases.

"A lot of our customers were pestered by phone scams purporting to come from TalkTalk or scammers pretending to work for Microsoft or any other big brand," says Steven Offerein, head of In-Home Products & Experience at TalkTalk, one of the big four ISP in the UK, with more than 4 million subscribers. "They were calling [them] saying there was an issue with their computer and that they would have to follow [their] instructions... to get rid of these problems and get their issues resolved." Ignorant of the threat they were facing, customers installed remote accesses to their computers and ended up giving their personal information away, eventually, losing serious sums of money.

TalkTalk decided to work on a solution. "It is something that we at TalkTalk wanted to do because we obviously felt the pain our customers felt,"

explains Offerein. "And the scams were targeting an especially vulnerable group."

The solution

Introducing CallSafe

"What we wanted to do was actually quite unique in the market," comments the Head of In-Home Products & Experience at TalkTalk. At that moment, the common answer was to get customers a piece of hardware to filter out calls, but that solution was difficult to set up, it would have required the shipment of hardware and this would have been too expensive for both the clients and TalkTalk. "So what we wanted to do was to take that capability that lives in those filtering devices and put it inside our network, so that we could actually have a filtering solution available for our entire customer base without having to ship devices to them." For free.

"What we wanted to do was actually quite unique in the market"

Steven Offerein,
Head of In-Home Products & Experience,
TalkTalk

“So we did an RFI/RFP process to find the right partner for this piece of work. ECT was one of the candidates as part of this process, so they were invited to show us what they could do in this space”, Offerein says.

ECT decided on a completely redundant solution in TalkTalk’s data center, developed on the *INTELLECT*® Service Delivery Platform and integrated to TalkTalk’s existing portals and systems. With this new service now known as CallSafe, TalkTalk customers could screen callers and block numbers, ensuring they only speak with the people they want to.

“Essentially,” explains Offerein, “it puts a filter on incoming calls, so when the customer turns on the solution all calls are being filtered and if the caller is on the approved list, the call goes straight away.” This way, your family and all the people you have called before are on the approved list, they will go through immediately, and your phone will ring at home just like you would expect. “Now if a caller or someone trying to reach you is not on the approved list, they will have to leave a message first,” continues Steven, “so, instead of your phone ringing at home, the caller will hear, ‘This customer has chosen to screen their incoming calls. Please leave your name after the beep and then the

phone in the customers pitch will ring, they will hear the message and decide, with the number pad on their phones, by pressing ‘1’ to allow, ‘2’ to block, etcetera, to allow or disallow the call coming at [them]. So way less scam calls for these customers.”

The result It is really big

“I think we can comfortably say that we are filtering out, with this solution alone, more than 11 million calls every month for customers that have subscribed to it,” shares Offerein, before adding, “it is really big.” Considering their active CallSafe customers number rounds 175,000, the scam protection it brings is impressive.

“Overall, we are very satisfied with this solution. It’s working really well,” he confirms. “Usually the customers being scammed are not very tech-savvy. They are usually elderly customers who actually trust the person who is calling them, so having that initial screening system in place is super important to this group in particular.”

The outcome was that instead of telling our customers, ‘Don’t listen to scammers, don’t do this, don’t do that’, now we actually have a solution in place. We can tell customers that say, ‘Oh, I’m being scammed by these nasty

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tough-new-measures-to-protect-savers-from-pension-scams>
2 <https://www.microsoft.com/security/blog/2018/04/20/teaming-up-in-the-war-on-tech-support-scams/>

About ECT

ECT is Europe’s leading communications software company. With our virtualized *INTELLECT*® Service Delivery Platform, innovative service applications and our Joint Agile Product Development Program, major communications service providers worldwide realize their products with minimal costs and the shortest possible time-to-market. We also often migrate existing services from multiple legacy platforms, innovating and consolidating them in one multiservice solution. As a one-shop vendor, we cover not only core services, like carrier routing, NP and FMU, but also sophisticated cloud services, e.g. for call centers and unified communications as a service (CCaaS and UCaaS as well as workflow collaboration. Our Innovation Department keeps our software development – and thus the products of our customers – on the cutting edge of communications technology. We empower BT, Deutsche Telekom, DNA, Hi3G, izzi, KCOM, Liberty Global, Proximus, TalkTalk, Telianera, Virgin Media, Videocon, VodafoneZiggo, among many others. In addition to our own direct sales and service primarily in Europe, we also partner with Nokia Networks which offers our products and services worldwide. Together with our customers and partner Nokia, we at ECT enjoy meeting challenges and creating opportunities.

Founded in 1998, ECT is an unlisted German public company with its headquarters in Munich, Germany and wholly owned sales and service subsidiaries in England, The Netherlands and the USA.

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No hardware required

ECT provided a redundant solution in TalkTalk’s Datacenter, without the need of setting up and shipping hardware to everyone, which would have been too expensive the company and the customer.



Caller screening and number blocker

person who you are trying to reach will decide whether they want to take your call, yes or no’. And actually it is at that point that we see the vast majority of scam calls have already stopped, because scammers are never going to leave their name or a message for a customer so that they can decide whether you hang up or not. It’s way too much effort for the scammers to try and get through that. So that’s where we see a huge drop-off already.

“If the calling party does leave their name or a message, the

people. TalkTalk, you need to help me,’ we actually have the solution for them. They could switch [CallSafe] on, free of charge. And a good thing is that out of the customers that are using the solution, none of them have lost any money to scammers.”

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