

Independent Guide To Directory Enquiry Services

Provided **free of charge** by
Business Cost Consultants

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1.0 Introduction

In December 2002 the market for directory enquiries opened up to a wide range of companies offering new products and services in addition to the basic directory enquiry service. This was done in order to increase competition and create better value and choice for customer.

However the customer is now faced with a huge choice of directory enquiry numbers with each company charging different rates and quite often providing a slightly different service. .

This guide sets out to explain the different types of directory enquiry services available and the costs associated with these services so that the customer can make an informed decision about the services they use.

There are two main types of directory enquiry services, telephone and on-line.

2.0 Fixed Line Telephone Providers

There are numerous companies offering directory enquiry services accessible by telephone. These are split into companies that offer services for national and international numbers. All directory enquiry numbers are 6 digit numbers beginning with 118.

A complete list of all companies offering telecom directory enquiries in the UK can be viewed on www.118tracker.co.uk

2.1 National Charging Methods

When calling directory enquiry services it is important to understand the different tariffs that can be applied to the call depending on the supplier chosen. At first glance it can be confusing for the customer as it is often difficult to compare the different tariff structures given the variety available.

There are 4 different ways you can be charged for Directory Enquiry Services.

Fixed Charge - One fixed charge independent of the length of call

Time Charge - Charge based on the length of call

Fixed and Time Charge - An initial fixed charge and duration charge.

Fixed Cost for First Minute - Charged by duration, but the first minute is fully charged even if the call is less than a minute

In addition to providing a complete list of suppliers, www.118tracker.com also details the tariffs of each service. The cost of a one minute call can vary from as little as 30p to as much as 150p.

2.1.1 Number of Searches

Providers vary in terms of how many number searches they will carry out per call. If several searches have to be made at one time this may influence the choice of 118 provider given the longer call duration.

2.1.2 Call Completion

Providers can also offer a call completion service. This means that on request they will connect you to the number you have requested. These call completion charges are often very expensive (between 5p and 30p per minute). Hence it is recommended that you note the number and dial it yourself, unless the call is urgent.

2.2 International Charging Methods

www.118tracker.co.uk also details providers who supply international directory enquiry services. On average these calls are a lot more expensive than national enquiries and can cost up to 200p per minute, however there are still some less expensive providers available.

3.0 Mobile Directory Enquiries

Directory enquiry services are also available to mobile phone users. Each mobile provider has its own recommended directory service. Costs of these services can be found on www.118tracker.com or by referring to individual mobile phone provider websites.

Not all 118 numbers may be available depending on the mobile network used and the charges can be complicated further depending on whether the phone is in a contract or pay as you go.

4.0 Internet Based Directory Enquiries

4.1 National

An alternative and often much cheaper method of directory enquiry is to use the internet.

British Telecom provide a free on-line directory enquiry service www.118500.com

This works for both business and residential use. Up to 50 free searches can be carried out per day.

Another good resource for unlimited searches is www.192.com This resource also searches other databases such as www.yell.co.uk and www.thompsonlocal.com to find a result.

4.2 International

BT also provide some online information for international directory enquiries at www.bt.com/international-guide

By selecting a country from the list, BT provide specific dialing information and for some countries a link to a directory enquiry site for that country.

Another interesting website www.infobel.com provides international directory enquiries to a selection of countries and links to other international directories.

5.0 Other Search Options

5.1 Electronic

Other options for a directory enquiry service include buying a CD from BT containing the data from all 171 UK telephone directories.

The cost of a single CD is around £36 exc vat per annum. The CD automatically ceases functioning after a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 15 months. Volume related discounts are available depending on the number purchased.

BT also provide the option of a Network and Intranet version. These versions are updated quarterly within each 12 month period and the cost varies depending on the number of users.

Details can be found at www.bt.com

5.2 Manual

The phone book still remains a simple, cost effective option to find telephone numbers. The phone book however will only provide numbers across a local area. Additional books for other areas can be purchased at a cost of around £10.

Details can be found at www.bt.com

6.0 Additional Links

www.118tracker.com/dq-links.shtml - Additional directory enquiry links.

www.ofcom.org.uk - Ofcom is the regulator for the UK telecommunication industry.

www.phonepayplus.org.uk- ICSTIS, the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services, is the industry-funded regulatory body for all premium rate charged telecommunications services.

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/oftel/publications/consumer/2002/dq1202.htm> - Guide to 118 directory enquiry services.