

David Cotterrell: The Ostrich Effect (v)

Date: 4th October 2013

Materials:

4 x Apple MacPro Computers, (Running Windows 7 64bit), Commercial IVR call centre software, Custom IVR applications and coding

The Ostrich Effect is a generative installation that explores the recursive loops that might occur in hypothetical scenarios. It is a computer-based conversation, which will never be resolved and will be continuously re-attempted.

The work is built using commercial automated call-centre servers, customising their IVR (Interactive Voice Response) programs to broadcast and handle telephone campaigns while programming individual call centre systems to dial and trigger each other. A prototype system involved four independent automated call-centres continuously attempting to call and negotiate with each other to sell their products, handle complaints, solicit customer feedback and broadcast government warnings.

With systems attempting to recognise each others responses, a perpetual loop of questions, diversions and holding patterns ensures that calls will neither achieve their assigned tasks nor fully demonstrate the futility of their method.

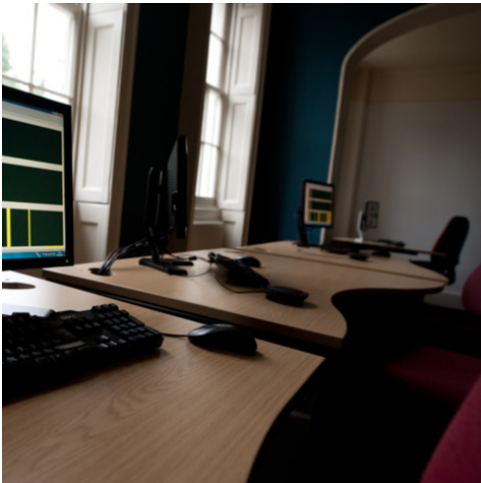
The computer systems (which are compatible with PBX and SIP phone exchanges) are each capable of making or receiving thousands of calls per day. This installation focusses the commercial and social power of these systems away from potential domestic customers and instead explores the limited, comic, frustrating and, at times, sinister, permutations of their interactions.



Installation View (Detail) Credit: David Cotterrell (2014)



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