

Telephones are a Changin'

by VCS

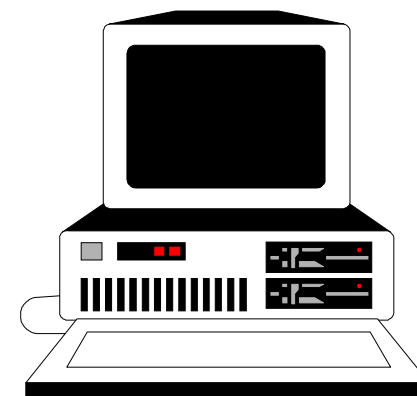
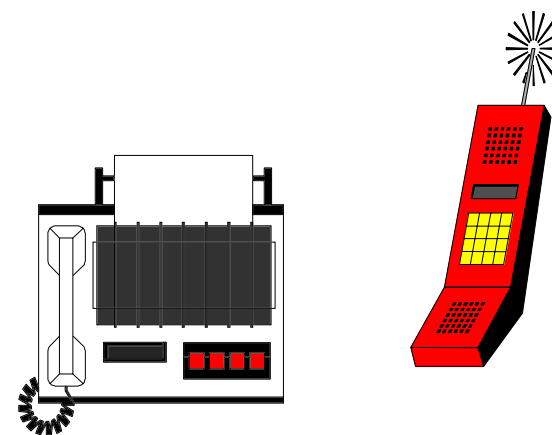
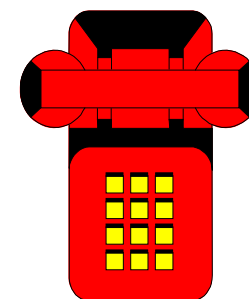
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The New Telephone Problem

VCS has been enhancing our voter files by adding telephone numbers for over 25 years. We do this by acquiring telephone files from a reliable national vendor, and matching the numbers on that file to our voter files based on name and address.

This used to be a fairly simple matter. We could do this match about once a year and count on having pretty good phones for our file.

But things have changed. Cell phones, faxes, and computers have caused us to want more phone lines in homes and offices. This has produced a potential problem for us and those who depend on us for their phone numbers.

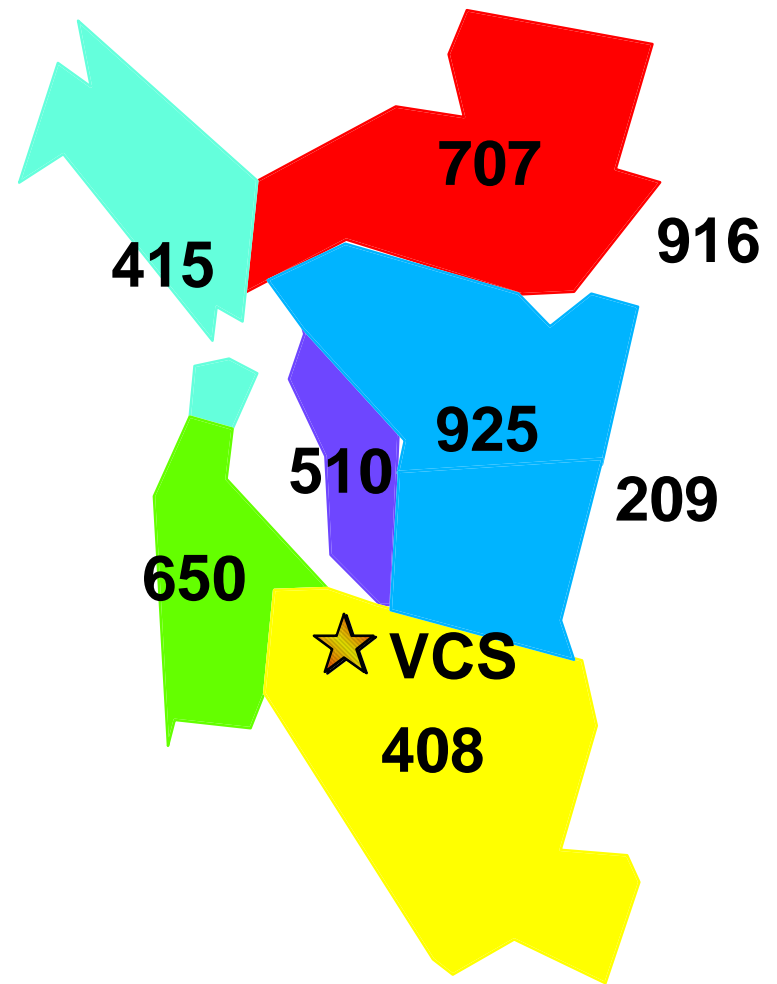


The New Area Code Problem

Today the demand for phone numbers has resulted in the phone companies running out of numbers in certain areas. When this happens they have to introduce a new area code.

Area code changes happen frequently now, so we can't count on having good numbers by matching just once a year.

In 1997-98, the Bell system will make over 50 area code changes (9 in California alone). All changes have a 6-month grace period, but sometimes voter files are not updated that often, especially in a non-election year.



Solving the Area Code Problem

There are two types of area code changes:

Splits are the most common. Certain prefixes within an existing area code are assigned a new area code, thus "splitting" the old area code into two area codes.

Overlays have just started to occur, but are expected to be used more and more frequently. On a certain date, all new phone numbers within a certain area code are given a new area code. This basically leads to a 10-digit phone numbering system, where you could have two lines in your house with DIFFERENT area codes!

To cope with this degree of change, we are now getting nationwide quarterly updates from Metromail. They assure us that their files will always be current with area code changes within the grace period. VCS takes on the additional burden of keeping our voter files current with these phone changes.



The Wrong Number Problem

Even if we make sure that we are using the latest area codes, there still may be a problem. The phone number on our file may be incorrect. This happens when the person on the file has moved or has changed their phone number, but has not notified the registrar of voters.

You may ask -- if we are matching on name and address, how could we be matching a phone if the person has moved?

To understand the answer to that question, you have to know a little bit more about how we match telephone numbers to the voter file. The next page shows graphically how the match takes place. When we match a number, we "remember" that match, so that if the person subsequently unlists that number, we still have it. So we match not only new phone files, but "remembered" phones.



How the Phone Match Works

Voter File

Proberta Gerber
1 Shady Lane
Possum Grape, AR

Phone File

Bertie Gerber
1 Shady Lane
Possum Grape, AR
(501) 333-1234

Match! Proberta gets phone (501) 333-1234

Proberta doesn't
like the weather;
moves to Florida



Phone Company gets
the message, but the
registrar doesn't

New Voter File

Proberta Gerber
1 Shady Lane
Possum Grape, AR

New Phone File

Proberta's in Miami.
No number in Arkansas



Match!

But it is a BAD number

Remembered Phones File

Bertie Gerber
1 Shady Lane
Possum Grape, AR
(501) 333-1234

Solving the Wrong Number Problem

The matching technique of "remembering" numbers allows a higher match rate, and sometimes results in knowing an unlisted number, but it also can cause bad numbers as illustrated on the previous page.

If you are working in an area that you know has a **transient** population, you probably want to work only with newly verified numbers. For example, a study was done in San Francisco, which showed that numbers not verified by a new phone file had a very high disconnect and wrong number rate. These numbers were less than 13% of the sample called, but represented almost 30% of the bad numbers!

So how do you tell if you are dealing with a number that is from the new phone file or with a number that is "remembered" from an older file? Use the Phone Flag for better results.



**Use The Phone Flag
for Better Results**

Phone Flag Codes

The Voter File has flags associated with each voter on the file. **Flag 21, The Phone Flag**, usually carries a code that indicates the age of the phone file that carried this voter's phone number.

There are a number of codes that appear on the Voter File. Some of them are for internal accounting, so several codes mean the same thing to you. Here are the codes that will appear in the Phone Flag on the Voter File:

F, B, G, W - Means the Number is on the **Current** Phone File.

C, H, N, X - Means the Number is on the **previous (Current -1)** Phone File, but not on the current File.

D, I, P, Y - Means the Number is on the Phone File **two previous** to the current File (**Current - 2**), but not on the two more current Files.

J, O, T, V - Means the Number is on a Phone File that is **older than the three most recent** Files, but is not on the more current Files.

SO IF YOU WANT ONLY THE MOST CURRENT PHONES, SELECT VALUES F, B, G, AND W FOR FLAG 21

Make Your Phoning As Smooth As Silk

Sometimes you want as many phone numbers as possible. If you are buying an office reference list, or have lots of volunteers who always call all the numbers you give them, by all means, get every possible number. Most will be correct, even if some will be disconnected or no longer for the correct family.

But if your callers are limited, or you are paying professional phoners, start by targeting the voters as carefully as possible. Then **Use the Phone Flag** to get as high a percent of correct numbers as possible.

Keep your phoning running smooth as silk. Cut down on wrong numbers and disconnects. Save money, and make volunteers delighted.

