

Do you ever feel that the tech giants are ganging up on you?



A few days ago, a client called me to say that **Thunderbird** (her email program) was reporting an error in sending/receiving emails. The problem appeared to be that the password was incorrect. After a short conversation, we decided that I would have a look at it using remote support. No luck. **Teamviewer** wasn't showing her an ID or a password that she could give to me to effect the connection. So, we agreed that a visit would be necessary.

The next day, after "hmming and aahing" over Thunderbird settings for a few minutes, it dawned on me to wonder if the problem might not, in fact, be with the Gmail account rather than Thunderbird. Luckily, the client stays logged into gmail via her browser. This proved that the account itself was still OK and it also allowed me to check the setting that allows "less secure apps" (as Gmail terms them) to access Gmail. And, blow me, the setting had been turned off. So we turned it back on. By this time (as is often the case) the situation regarding the actual password had become very confused, so we changed the password, entered it into Thunderbird, and all was well again.

Why had Google changed the setting to block Thunderbird? Why hadn't they told my client? Who knows?

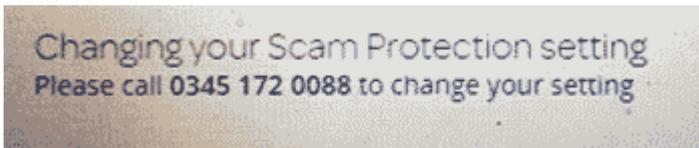
Anyway, buoyed up by success, we turned to Teamviewer to find out why it hadn't worked the previous day. Clearly, my purple patch continued as I thought to ask her if her internet provider is TalkTalk. Yes, it is. Ho hum. **I recently blogged about their blocking Teamviewer** in their setting called "scam protection". So, we logged onto the "dashboard" of her TalkTalk account and, yes, they had turned "scam protection" on! I can't remember when I had last used Teamviewer with this client, but TalkTalk have clearly changed the setting back to blocking it since we had last used it. And, just like Google, they did this without any reference to the client.



And it gets worse.....

When I wrote my [recent blog](#), it was possible to change the setting in the dashboard. Now, however, a popup window tells you you have to phone them.

... much worse...



When you try to call them, the phone is answered by a computer. There is no list of options: you just state the problem. The computer doesn't understand the problem and starts taking wild guesses about your

"issue". You can even quote the wording from their popup ("Scam protection setting") and it won't understand. Eventually, we gave up with my client saying she would try again later. This she did and ultimately managed to get through to a human being by just refusing to engage with the computer. She just kept shtum until a human being finally came onto the line. Said human being actually managed to find other humans working for TalkTalk and my client was eventually put through to someone who was able to change the setting. Lo and behold, we were able to connect remotely again using Teamviewer.

There isn't any kind of recourse that users have when these tech firms do things like this (whether they do it intentionally or as an unwanted side effect of other changes). It is very very dispiriting, disempowering, and unfair.

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