

How May I Help You?

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Yesterday I thought I would call my cable company, the one that provides my internet access in Maine, to inquire about creating internet access in another room of the house here...a room that we call "the studio" which is between the house and the barn, attached to each, since this is one of those old New England farmhouses which were built in a way to make it easy to get to the critters during a blizzard. The studio is quite separate from the rest of the house, and very quiet, and I thought that it would be a good place to work when there is a lot of company, or when there are grandchildren running around. But although the studio is heated and has electricity and a ceiling fan and a couch and pictures on the wall, and is quite comfortable, it does not have cable access.

And so I called.

I was aware, before I called, that there might be a problem at least as far as wireless access. The studio, like the barn, has a tin roof. A brand new one, in fact. And for that reason, my satellite radio doesn't work there, nor my cell phone. So perhaps what I would need would be a whole separate modem in the studio.

I was put on hold for a while, of course. One expects that. After I listened to several rounds of a Brandenburg Concerto (I think the 5th, actually) I got a human. A woman. I explained...make that tried to explain...my inquiry.

Hmmmm, she replied. She didn't know whether wireless would work under those circumstances. She would transfer me to the tech department.

After considerably more music, I talked to a young man. I told him my set of circumstances. *How far are you from your existing modem,* he asked.
More than 20 feet?

Well, duh, I thought. If I were 20 feet from my existing computer - and its modem - why wouldn't I just use my existing computer and modem?

Yes, much more than 20 feet, I told him.

How much more?

A lot, I said. I calculated in my head, measuring in my imagination. Probably 90 feet, I said.

Oh, he said. A lot.

And the room I'd like to use - the room that is 90 feet away - has a tin roof.

A what?

A tin roof. My satellite radio and my cell phone don't work in that room because of a tin roof.

There was a long silence.

Listen, he said at last, I'm in Pennsylvania. If you'll hold, I'll transfer you to someone in Maine.

I held.

Someone in Maine eventually came to the phone. So, the guy in Maine said, *I understand you have a tin room?*

Sigh. I wonder what a tin room would look like, actually. Here is what the studio, which is not a tin room, looks like.

A guy from the cable company....a human...is coming on Wednesday to see it. Maybe then they will understand what I'm talking about.

But I am not really very optimistic.



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