Leaky Blackberry Spills the Juice

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It’s been so wet in Vermont lately that even the mushrooms are soggy. A delegation of frogs from our pond came to ask us for a sunlamp the other day, and some of the cows are turning green and black. So when the bright yellow thing came out for a few minutes one morning last week, I dashed out with the dogs to play Frisbee and to stare at the funny blue patches in the sky.

When I returned to my office above the garage, I checked my phone for voice mail. Yep, there was a message from one of my clients – Girolamo Frescobaldi of Ferrara, who had called me earlier that morning. But wait – what was this? A fragment of conversation? Discussing a product? Whoa – this was clearly not meant for me. After about 20 seconds of inadvertent eavesdropping, I saved the message and called my client.

“Ciao, Girolamo!”

“Si, Mich? Come sta?”

“Girolamo, ascolti questo [listen to this]!” And I conference-called my voice-mail and played a few seconds of the message for him.

“Madre di Dio e tutti i santi!” he exclaimed. “How did you get that?”

“Well,” I said, “it appears that your Blackberry called me and got my voice-mail. Would you like me to delete the rest of the message?”

“Per amor di Dio, Sì! Sì!”

So I hit the delete key and he heard the reassuring dulcet tones of the voice-mail system saying, “Message deleted.”

It turns out that Girolamo’s Blackberry has a button on top for automatic redial of the last number called. Luckily, the entire device (except an emergency 911 call button) can be locked automatically after a timeout or manually to prevent accidental dialing or use of hotkeys; re-enabling the device requires a password that can be strong. So Girolamo must have (a) failed to lock his device and (b) accidentally hit the redial through the third-party soft case he uses while he was in the middle of a sensitive discussion with one of his colleagues about one of their products. And he said that if that particular conversation had been heard by, say, a news reporter (I don’t count), “ogni inferno avrebbe potuto rompere sciolto.” [Take a guess.]

Moral #1: If your cell phone or equivalent does not have a complete lockout on at least the keyboard, TURN IT OFF when you are discussing anything that is highly sensitive.

Moral #2: Don’t let people keep their cell phones with them in meetings where highly sensitive topics are discussed.
Abbia un bel giorno. Privatamente. [Have a nice day. Privately.]

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