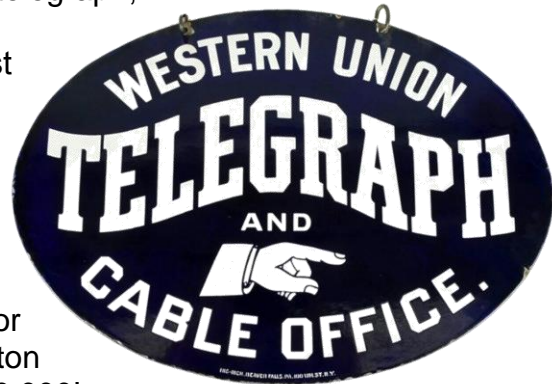


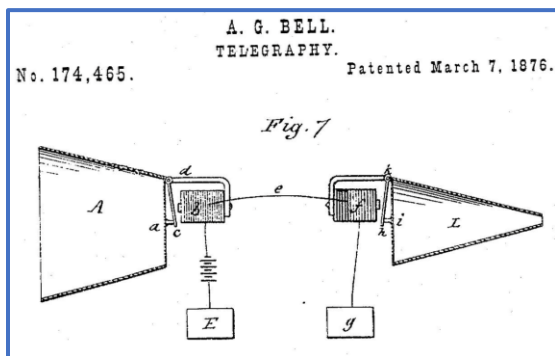
Who Needs an Electrical Toy?

In 1876, Western Union had a monopoly on the telegraph, the world's most advanced communications technology. This made it one of America's richest and most powerful companies, with \$41 million in capital and the pocketbooks of the financial world behind it.

So when Gardiner Greene Hubbard, a wealthy Bostonian, approached William Orton, the Western Union president, with an offer to sell the patent for a new invention Hubbard had helped to fund, Orton treated it as a joke. Hubbard was asking for \$100,000!

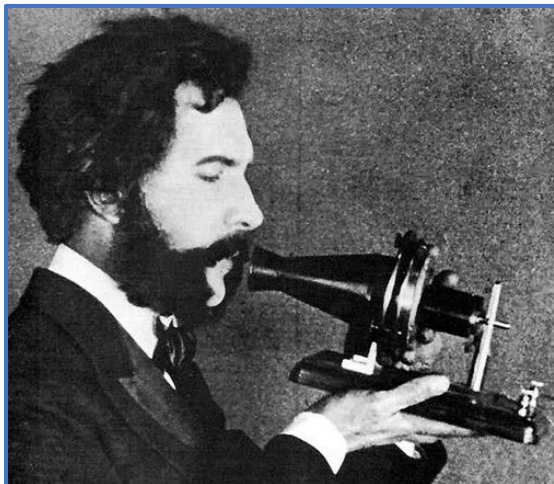


Orton bypassed Hubbard and drafted a response directly to the inventor. He wrote:



“Mr. Bell, after careful consideration of your invention, while it is a very interesting novelty, we have come to the conclusion that it has no commercial possibilities ... What use could this company make of an electrical toy?”

The invention, the telephone, would have been perfect for Western Union. The company had a nationwide network of telegraph wires in place, and the inventor, 29-year-old Alexander Graham Bell, had shown that his telephone worked quite well on telegraph lines. All the company had to do was hook telephones up to its existing lines and it would have had the world's first nationwide telephone network in a matter of months.



Instead, Bell kept the patent and in a few decades his telephone company, renamed American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) had become the largest corporation in America. The Bell patent – offered to Orton for a measly \$100,000 – became the single most valuable patent in history.

Ironically, less than two years after turning Bell down, Orton realized the magnitude of his mistake and spent millions of dollars challenging Bell's patents while attempting to build his own telephone network (which he was ultimately forced to hand over to Bell).

(more)

Instead of going down in history as one of the architects of the telephone age, he is instead remembered for having made one of the worst decisions in American business history.

It's hard to imagine a more obvious business opportunity than the one turned down by Western Union's William Orton, who couldn't see the "electrical toy" for what it could become. He was too blinded by his present success to appreciate the profound implications this opportunity held for the future.



In the spiritual realm, this is exactly the situation many people place themselves in as they scoff at the prospect offered to them in the Good News of the Bible. Do they continue as they are, content with their current place in life, or do they embrace the divine opportunity to have their lives count not just for now but for eternity?

Don't end up scrambling like William Orton, after it's already too late, to make up for the opportunity of a lifetime.

For He (Jesus) says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter