



United States of America
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
East Central Region

1111 Superior Avenue, Suite 200
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
(216) 263-3455

Jon Miller Steiger
Director

March 17, 2023

CEASE AND DESIST DEMAND

VIA EMAIL TO:

accounting@telcentris.com;
accounting@telecentris.com

Telcentris, Inc., also d/b/a Voxox
Bryan Hertz, CEO
5825 Oberlin Drive, Suite 5
San Diego, CA 92121
c/o Kristopher Twomey, Registered Agent

We have determined that Telcentris, Inc., also d/b/a Voxox (Telcentris) is apparently routing and transmitting illegal robocall traffic, directly or indirectly, for entities involved in the following campaigns:

- Amazon-AuthorizeOrder
- Apple-iCloud-AccountBreached
- CCIRR-VisaAlert
- SSA-Suspended
- StudentLoan-ProcessingCenter
- Utility-30MinDisconnect

More specifically, our investigation revealed that Telcentris apparently routed and transmitted illegal robocalls, as set forth in Attachment A.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) works closely with USTelecom's Industry Traceback Group (ITG), which is the registered industry consortium selected pursuant to the TRACED Act to conduct tracebacks.¹ Between January 15, 2021, and December 21, 2022, ITG investigated 16 prerecorded voice message calls that law enforcement, voice service providers using honeypots (i.e., unassigned numbers held by providers to detect illegal robocalls), and customers of YouMail had flagged as illegal robocalls made without consent of the called party.²

¹ See Pallone-Thune Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence Act, Pub. L. No. 116-105, 133 Stat. 3274, Sec. 13(d) (2019) (TRACED Act).

² See 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(v).

ITG conducted tracebacks and determined that Telcentris routed and transmitted the calls. ITG previously notified you of these calls and provided you access to supporting data identifying each call—including a recording of the illegal robocall—as indicated in Attachment A. Further, the numerous traceback notices directed to Telcentris indicate that you are apparently routing and transmitting illegal robocall traffic knowingly. **IF YOU ARE ENGAGED IN THESE ACTIVITIES, THEN YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY CEASE AND DESIST FROM ENGAGING IN THEM.**

The FTC, the nation’s consumer protection agency, enforces the Federal Trade Commission Act (FTC Act), 15 U.S.C. § 45 et seq., which prohibits unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce. The FTC also enforces the Telemarketing Sales Rule (TSR), 16 C.F.R. Part 310, which prohibits deceptive and abusive telemarketing practices. Section 310.3(b) of the TSR prohibits “assisting and facilitating” certain specified conduct.³ Under that provision, it is unlawful for any person or entity to “provide substantial assistance or support to any seller or telemarketer when that person knows or consciously avoids knowing that the seller or telemarketer is engaged in any act or practice that violates Sections 310.3(a), (c), or (d), or Section 310.4 of this Rule.” These Sections prohibit, among others, the following conduct:

- Making a false or misleading statement to induce any person to pay for goods or services or to induce a charitable contribution (16 C.F.R. § 310.3(a)(4));
- Misrepresenting a seller or telemarketer’s affiliation with any government entity (16 C.F.R. § 310.3(a)(2)(vii));
- Transmitting false or deceptive caller ID numbers (16 C.F.R. § 310.4(a)(8));
- Initiating or causing the initiation of calls that deliver prerecorded messages,⁴ unless the person called provided the seller express written permission to call (16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(v)); and
- Initiating or causing the initiation of telemarketing calls to numbers listed on the National Do Not Call Registry, unless the person called provided express written permission to receive calls from the seller or the seller had an existing business relationship with the person called (16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)).

The FTC can obtain civil penalties for TSR violations. Each illegal call is subject to a maximum civil penalty of \$50,120. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 1.98. In addition, a violation of the TSR is a violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act. *See* 15 U.S.C. §§ 6102(c), 57a(d)(3), 45(a). Accordingly, the FTC has authority to seek both preliminary and permanent injunctive relief to address TSR violations. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 53(b). The FTC may also seek the refund of money or payment of damages to address TSR violations. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 57b(b).

Combatting illegal telemarketing is a top priority for the FTC, with a special emphasis on halting illegal robocalls.⁵ We want you to be aware that the FTC has, for example, brought

³ A copy of the TSR is attached as Attachment B.

⁴ These calls are often referred to as “robocalls.”

⁵ In 2022, the FTC received more than 2.7 million complaints about unwanted calls, including more than 1.61 million robocall complaints. The FTC maintains an interactive Tableau Public web page that publishes details about do not call complaints on a quarterly basis. *See*

assisting and facilitating claims against technology companies that knowingly provided software and servers used by illegal robocallers, even though these technology companies did not contract directly with the illegal robocallers. *See FTC v. James B. Christiano*, Case No. 8:18-cv-00936 (C.D. Cal. May 31, 2018).

We also bring to your attention that the FTC has sued VoIP service providers for allegedly violating the TSR. In *FTC v. Educare*, the FTC alleged that defendant Globex Telecom, Inc. assisted and facilitated telemarketers it knew, or consciously avoided knowing, were violating the TSR's prohibitions on calls delivering prerecorded messages. *See FTC v. Educare Centre Services, Inc.*, No. 3:19-cv-00196-KC (W.D. Tex. Dec. 3, 2019).⁶ In September, 2020, Globex Telecom and its associates agreed to pay \$2.1 million to settle the FTC lawsuit, and Globex Telecom's former CEO and President was banned from telemarketing to the U.S. and was subject to a permanent court order.⁷ Similarly, in *FTC v. Alcazar Networks, Inc.*, the FTC alleged that Alcazar Networks, Inc. and its founder and sole owner assisted and facilitated telemarketers responsible for tens of millions of illegal telemarketing calls, including robocalls and spoofed calls that displayed "911" as the caller ID. *See FTC v. Alcazar Networks Inc., et al.*, No. 6:20-cv-2200 (M.D. Fla. Dec. 3, 2020).⁸ As part of their settlement with the FTC in January 2021, the defendants agreed to a permanent injunction that prohibits similar misconduct in the future and requires them to screen and monitor their customers, as well as imposing a monetary penalty.⁹

The FTC has business educational materials that can assist you in complying with the TSR. *See* <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-telemarketing-sales-rule>.

In addition to FTC regulations and the FTC's actions against providers of VoIP services, you should also be aware that the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), state attorneys general, and other agencies have brought civil actions against VoIP companies and their owners. In two cases, DOJ alleged that the defendants were committing and conspiring to commit wire fraud by knowingly transmitting robocalls that impersonated federal government agencies.¹⁰ In August 2020, a federal district court entered a permanent court order barring the defendants from

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/federal.trade.commission#!/vizhome/DoNotCallComplaints/Maps>.

⁶ A copy of the FTC's Amended Complaint is attached as Attachment C.

⁷ *See* <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2020/09/globex-telecom-associates-will-pay-21-million-settling-ftcs-first>.

⁸ A copy of the FTC's Complaint is attached as Attachment D.

⁹ *See* <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2020/12/ftc-takes-action-against-second-voip-service-provider>.

¹⁰ *See* <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/department-justice-files-actions-stop-telecom-carriers-who-facilitated-hundreds-millions>.

conveying telephone calls into the U.S. telephone system.¹¹ State cases have had similar impacts.¹²

Within three business days, please send a message to FTC attorneys Fil Maria de Banate and Christian M. Capece, via electronic mail at fdebanate@ftc.gov and ccapecce@ftc.gov, certifying that Telcentris has ceased engaging in the activities described above that may subject it to liability under the TSR or the FTC Act. Please direct any inquiries regarding this letter to Mr. de Banate and Mr. Capece by email or by telephone at 216.263.3413 or 216.263.3419.

Sincerely,

JONATHAN
N STEIGER

Digitally signed by
JONATHAN STEIGER
Date: 2023.03.17
14:55:26 -04'00'

Jon Miller Steiger
Director

Enclosures:

Attachment A (Chart of illegal robocalls)

Attachment B (TSR)

Attachment C (*Educare* Amended Complaint)

Attachment D (*Alcazar* Complaint)

¹¹ See <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/district-court-enters-permanent-injunction-shutting-down-telecom-carriers-who-facilitated>.

¹² For example, the Vermont and Michigan Attorneys General have brought successful actions against VoIP providers who route scam robocall traffic. See <https://ago.vermont.gov/blog/2022/08/02/vermont-joins-nationwide-anti-robocall-task-force>; <https://www.michigan.gov/ag/news/press-releases/2020/08/07/ag-nessel-announces-settlement-eliminating-telecom-carrier-responsible-for-illegal-robocalls>; https://www.michigan.gov/documents/ag/Assurance_of_Voluntary_Compliance_-_All_Access_Telecom_FINAL_9-11-20_702047_7.pdf.

ATTACHMENT A

Date of ITG Notification	Date of Call	Caller ID	Robocall Campaign Identifier	Link to Robocall Recording	Potential Violation
12/21/2022	12/20/2022	4092694582	StudentLoan-ProcessingCenter	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/1183779	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
12/21/2022	12/20/2022	2293548990	StudentLoan-ProcessingCenter	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/1183793	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
10/27/2022	10/26/2022	2038886127	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/1100694	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
10/27/2022	10/26/2022	6143009785	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/1100697	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
7/27/2022	7/26/2022	3262225019	SSA-Suspended	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/974385	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
7/27/2022	7/26/2022	5205270501	SSA-Suspended	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/974387	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
2/17/2022	2/5/2022	8033881517	SSA-Suspended	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/688077	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
12/3/2021	12/2/2021	6157665214	CCIRR-VisaAlert	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/579548	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
11/19/2021	11/18/2021	4845785720	Amazon-AuthorizeOrder	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/565718	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
10/18/2021	10/14/2021	8137654004	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/520026	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
10/15/2021	10/14/2021	8168881463	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/520019	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
10/15/2021	10/14/2021	8133353576	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/520027	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
10/8/2021	10/7/2021	3053938506	Amazon-AuthorizeOrder	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/500486	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
8/2/2021	7/31/2021	7024025555	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/314151	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)

3/9/2021	3/8/2021	9107928296	Utility-30MinDisconnect	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/64732	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)
1/15/2021	1/15/2021	4088847419	Apple-iCloud-AccountBreached	https://portal2.tracebacks.org/api/public/attachments/28354	16 C.F.R. 310.4(b)(1)(v)