(Approx. 621 words)

Adventures with Apple and AppleCare Support

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Having collected several Apple devices -- my and wife's iPhones/iPads, my Apple Watch, three HomePod Minis -- plus six outlets controlled by the Home app -- I've also collected a (very) few gripes, frustrations, irritations, and wishes:

* After the most recent Watch/iPhone software updates, very simple automation stopped working.
* Grouped notifications no longer indicate how many are stacked.
* The Zoom app didn't update on iPad with other apps; it had to be done manually.
* Siri Intercom messages only play on HomePods, not on iOS/iPadOS devices as
* I'd expected.

I finally called Apple to address at least the most annoying first two problems, especially the failed automation.

After negotiating the obligatory (but not ghastly) phone robot, I reached a very pleasant woman who quite thoroughly researched the automation problem -- putting me on hold for a bit, returning and apologizing for the hold, researching more. She finally said she'd have to escalate to Level 2.

In the process of doing that, I was disconnected. I sighed, not wanting to repeat the entire process. Then my phone rang, and I was called back and connected to the same person. That's NEVER happened when talking to customer support and disconnected -- it's ALWAYS involved calling again and starting from scratch.

I was then connected to John, "Senior Advisor" or some such title. He was great; he understood the problem, reviewed steps I'd taken to research/resolve it, and said I needn't repeat them (again, contrasted with most customer support, which follows rigid scripts and insists that steps be followed for them even if they've already been done).

When I mentioned that a local Apple employee had replicated the problem (likely with a newer iPhone than mine), he agreed that probably meant the problem wasn't specific to my hardware/software. He spent quite a while documenting the problem, during which he put me on hold and apologized for the wait; I joked that he might be writing a book about the problem and said I was keeping busy on my computer while waiting. I said that I hoped he wouldn't hold against me because I was using a Windows PC; he laughed and said he had one too.

He sent me an email giving his contact information and a link to upload a screenshot of the failure message on my Watch when he finished. Finally, he said he'd take ownership of the problem and made an appointment to call back with updates from engineering.

He called back on the designated day and apologized for being nearly an hour late. I laughed and said that he was so far ahead of support from that other technology company (whose name starts with "M") that I hadn't noticed. He said the problem was understood and would be fixed in an upcoming operating system update -- either the next or the one after that. It wasn't fixed in one just installed -- there likely wasn't time for it to get in that one -- so I assume it will be along shortly.

So that's more strong contrasts with other tech support experiences -- individual problem ownership, contact information provided without being requested, and definite checkpoint provided.

The Zoom app now appears to be updating normally, with other apps (and it's not clear where that problem was); not displaying the number of stacked notifications seems to have been a deliberate (though puzzling) decision, and I'm still researching the Intercom issue.

Despite my product(s) being out of warranty coverage, Apple provided complimentary phone support. This support is available for questions, and product problems after the warranty and AppleCare (if purchased) have expired.