

FTC Offers \$50,000 Challenge to Discover Robocall Solution

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The FTC recently opened a public “[challenge](#)” for the “public to create an innovative solution to block illegal commercial robocalls on landlines and mobile phones.” The FTC has offered a \$50,000 cash prize for the best technical solution. As [we reported](#) in June, the FCC has taken a keen interest in robocalls recently by, among other things, publishing a final rule on robocalls. This time it is the FTC’s turn. The robocall challenge is free and open to the public and will be run through the U.S. General Services Administration’s [challenge.gov](#). Entries will be accepted until January 17, 2013, at 5:00 pm Eastern. If a winning solution is identified, the FTC will announce the winner or winners in April 2013. The best overall solution prize will be awarded to an individual, team, or small corporation (fewer than ten employees) based on the following criteria: (a) Does it work? (50 percent); (b) Is it easy to use? (25 percent); and (c) Can it be rolled out? (25 percent). Organizations that employ more than ten people may compete for an award that does not include a cash prize. To enlist the help of participants, the FTC will provide data on de-identified consumer complaints about robocalls made between June 2008 and September 2012. The FTC has created the challenge because “current technology still allows shady telemarketers to cheaply autodial thousands of phone calls every minute and display false or misleading caller ID information.”

TIP: The FTC has shown a keen interest in putting law-shirking robocallers out of business. With its recent announcement of a \$50,000 prize to determine the best technical solution to ending unlawful robocalls, the FTC has demonstrated put its money where its mouth is. Companies whose technical teams think they can create a solution may want to use this challenge as an opportunity to be a part of the dialog with the FTC about the issue of telemarketing calls.

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