



Telephone operators, an icon of modernity

With the advent of the telephone, a new profession was born: the telephone operator, most of whom were women. By dialling 09, operators attended to subscribers with a kind and competent voice, in order to establish a manual connection between two numbers.

Telephone operators became one of the symbols of Telefónica during its first 50 years of existence. Famous for their efficiency – the result of exemplary discipline – they had to meet several requirements to qualify for the job: be aged between 18 and 27, not wear glasses, have an arm span of 1.55 metres and take an oath to not disclose any details of what they might overhear. They also had to be unmarried; and there was even a time when, upon marrying, they had to stop working. In return, they gained status and a privileged position in one of the most important and innovative companies of the time.

Would you like to know what it felt like to be in a telephone operator room?

Listen to how they attended to subscribers in a 1980s trunk exchange, maintaining efficiency in an orchestrated environment of ring tones and mingled voices.

