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Appy daze: Not all of us are switched on to smartphones

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Smartphones have revolutionised our lives.

These high-powered computers connect us to the world in a way we have never seen before, and businesses cleverly leverage their power to improve customer experiences, by adding value or convenience.

Many memberships or services are now accessed via a mobile phone app.

We use them to log in to our favourite streaming service, to book a car or to help us navigate unfamiliar streets.

There are apps to help us remember a song on the radio or to count the number of steps we take in a day.

It has become too easy to ask our smartphone for the answer, rather than relying on our memory.

Some older people have never owned a smartphone and would prefer it to stay that way. They are happy to use their trusted landline when

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they need to make a telephone call.

Keeping up with new technologies can be confusing for all of us. For people with limited digital literacy, these changes must be unnerving, particularly as they age.

We take for granted being able to pay our bills, do our banking or book restaurants online. Accessing services in traditional ways is becoming increasingly difficult and there is a risk that people who do not own or use a smartphone will become excluded.

A friend recently wanted to update the credit card details on his membership subscription, which he has held for decades.

He was advised that he

would need to do that via the app, which up until that point he never had the need to use, nor could recall the logon details.

With the operator's assistance, he succeeded in accessing the app, only to find that he had to confirm the changes via his email account, which he also rarely uses.

Thankfully, in the end, common sense prevailed, and the customer service operator bent a few rules to update his membership.

Technology is changing all the time and it can be difficult for all of us to keep up.

There needs to remain some capacity for people to access services, even if they don't have a smartphone.

It is critical that older people are not excluded, just because they haven't downloaded the latest app.

Darren Birbeck is chief executive officer of Resthaven Incorporated

