



VoIP: Does It Really Save Money?

As consumers, we're used to seeing prices go up. But rarely do we get to enjoy sizable price cuts, especially when it comes to basic utilities and necessities - like phone service. But using new technology, you really can save hundreds on long distance. In fact, you can talk as long as you want for one, low monthly fee. Here's how: VoIP, short for Voice over Internet Protocol, uses your existing broadband Internet connection, be that cable or DSL, for handset phone service.

A few years back, this technology was shoddy, at best. You could get free long distance calling, but you paid the price in hollow, garbled voices on the other end. So this technology never succeeded in capturing mainstream telecommunication customers. But today, companies like Vonage have tapped into this same technology, offering high-quality phone service at a fraction of the cost you would pay to the phone company.

Set-up and installation is easy for anyone familiar with basic Internet and computer functionality. You simply plug your Internet cord into a router box, much like hooking up cable TV. Then you connect the router box with your phone. You can use wireless telephones that network together, offering as many peripheral handsets as necessary, each requiring just an electrical plug. An average, unlimited plan covering long distance across the U.S., Canada and Mexico is just about \$30 per month.

Other perks included the option to receive voicemail as an audio file via email, online archival of voicemail and historical call logs, the ability to transfer your existing phone number and the

option to select any area code you desire, so family or friends can call you using their local area code and avoid long distance charges. Most VoIP providers also offer Caller ID.

But like all good things, there are downsides. VoIP services require electricity and an Internet connection. So should you lose power or Internet connectivity, you also lose phone service. Further, 911 Emergency registration is the user's responsibility - and optional. So its highly advisable to enter your correct street address to expedite and automate emergency service deployment.

Finally telecommunications technology has advanced, offering consumers steep discounts and much wanted freedom. Look into all of your options and balance the pros and cons to determine whether or not VoIP is right for you.

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