

How Voice Over IP Works

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Voice Over Internet Protocol (or VoIP for short) is the latest technology many people are using in addition to, or as an alternative for, their traditional phone service. There are many reasons why customers are flocking to VoIP service providers and away from traditional phone companies. One of these reasons is the lower cost. But before taking advantage of all the benefits that come with VoIP, it's good to know how Voice Over IP works.

How It Works

Voice Over IP uses your existing Internet connection to place and receive phone calls. Instead of your calls traveling out of the phone line, your voice is turned into "packets" which are then transmitted over the Internet in the exact same manner as your regular Internet traffic. On the other end of the call, the "packets" are converted back into regular voice sounds just like a normal phone. The person on the receiving end will likely not even notice the difference.

What Equipment Is Needed

VoIP calls can be made from your regular phone if you have an adapter (provided by the VoIP phone company). You can also use a special VoIP phone or specialized software on your computer to make calls. The software feature is particularly attractive to people who work on the road or travel a lot since you can make and receive calls from anywhere you can access the Internet. So you can be sitting in your local coffee shop or waiting at the gate at the airport and as long as they have a connection to the Internet (usually wireless in these cases) then you're still able to access your phone system.

Advantages of VoIP

Typically, VoIP offers more features and services than your local phone company offers. In fact, some features might not be available from your local phone company at all, but instead, might be specific to VoIP service. Most of these features are built right in to the calling plan so you end up paying a flat rate rather than a monthly fee plus per-minute charges. This makes your phone calling more affordable and more predictable, as opposed to trying to time each long distance call. Who is disciplined enough to do that? And how many times have you been surprised by the bill you got from the phone company? Not the case with VoIP service.

Things to Watch Out For

The biggest thing to watch out for is to make sure your VoIP service supports 911 calling. Most of the larger companies are tied in to 911 now so it shouldn't be an issue. But if you choose one of the smaller companies, a little due diligence is in order. As an alternative, you could maintain your existing telephone line and use that for emergency calls only and use your VoIP line for everything else, but whether or not that is cost-effective depends on the monthly fees and how much calling you do from month to month.

All in all, VoIP is a great option for consumers looking for an alternative to more expensive local telephone service. Check out your VoIP options and see if Internet telephony might be a good solution for you too.