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**VOIP Small Business/Home Business Advantage**

**By Joel Walsh**

Small businesses, home-based businesses, and self-employed individuals have been turning to internet telephone service (also called broadband phone or VOIP) in droves. What is the attraction? As a self-employed, telecommuting, small-business-owning freelance writer, I can provide some insight.

I switched my business to internet phones early in 2005. Despite a few hiccups, I'm not going back to landlines. Internet phone service has too many advantages, which I'll describe for you. I also have some tips for avoiding possible rough patches.

**VOIP Internet Phone Small Business and SOHO Advantages**

**VOIP Advantage No. 1: Look bigger.**

\* If your small business has to seem large, a virtual PBX with a dial-by-name directory might help. These systems cost thousands to install. But many VOIP companies let you rent this service for less than a hundred dollars a month.

\* Give each member of your team their own outside line. With most VOIP companies, each line costs around \$10.

\* Get one or more 1-800 numbers at around \$10/month.

**VOIP Advantage No 2. Freedom of movement.**

\* Freedom to travel. When I went to Sacramento to visit a friend, I ended up extending my stay to a whole month. I couldn't have done that without regular phone access. With VOIP, my Massachusetts number follows me wherever I go.

\* Tropical adventures. I regularly work with a virtual assistant company that takes phone calls on their Quebec phone number everyday. That wouldn't be so strange except they're in the Philippines.

## VOIP Small Business/Home Business Advantage

They're using the same small business VOIP phone service sold right here in North America. True, VOIP companies don't generally guarantee their services will work outside the country of purchase. But the internet is the internet, whether in Fargo or the South Pacific. With the growth of broadband to virtually every non-pariah nation on earth, your second office really could be in a tropical paradise—or year-round ski resort. Isn't that the freedom you hoped being your own boss would bring?

\* Telecommuting. Feel a cold coming? Work from home! With VOIP, even the receptionist may be able to telecommute!

\* Voicemail by email. You don't have to be by the phone to get voicemail. This is the perfect service for busy people and email addicts. Bonus: the message (in a file similar those used on MP3 players) can be stored indefinitely.

### Internet Phone Advantage 3. Cost

\* Make lots of calls? Many VOIP providers' unlimited-calling plans cost just \$20 to \$80 a month.

\* Features such as call waiting, caller ID, hold, call forwarding, and multiple ring-to numbers are usually costly extras with landline service. With most VOIP services, those are built-in features.

### SOHO VOIP: Tips for Making it Work for Your Business

#### SOHO VOIP Tip 1. Test internet phoning out before committing.

Yes, some VOIP connections are so scratchy and patchy they sound like cell phones. That's usually because of a problem in the internet connection. Such problems may not be apparent in ordinary web browsing and file downloading. Go with a service that has a 30-day money-back guarantee. Try VOIP out where you live and work. Make sure to try inbound and outbound calls.

#### Small Business Internet Phone Tip 2. Phoning from a laptop.

With VOIP telephones, you don't need a computer. But you can use your computer as a phone. A piece of software called a "softphone" uses your computer's speakers and microphone. If your laptop is running too many programs at once, calls will deteriorate. Higher-end laptops shouldn't have this problem.

#### SOHO Internet Phones Tip 3. Go with an established VOIP company.

You don't want to lose your telephone service and possibly your number. Yet only a few VOIP companies have roots before 2000. Choose a service with deep enough roots to survive a VOIP industry shake-out.

#### Small Biz Internet Phoning Tip 4. Choose a provider carefully before putting the number on your business cards.

Switching VOIP companies is at least as much of a pain as switching landline phone companies. In fact, there is typically no outward number–portability. You can bring a number in, but good luck taking it with you. Researching in early 2005, I found no nationwide VOIP services officially offering outward number portability.

Choose a VOIP provider with a 30–day money–back guarantee. Test the service out thoroughly. One thing is likely: you may want to switch VOIP providers, but you won't want to go back to landline.

About the author: Joel Walsh, freelance writer and small business owner, recommends you check out Packet8, an established provider of VOIP:

<http://www.packet8.net>

?%20VOIP [Publish this article on

your website! Requirements: 1. Live link for above URL/web address. 2. Link anchor text: "VOIP" OR leave this bracketed message intact.]

### **VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)**

#### **By Marcom Communications**

#### **VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) by Marcom Communications**

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) has promised much for a few years. But now it is fast becoming a viable option for many UK businesses and home workers. VoIP technology allows telephone calls to be made over the internet at a fraction of the cost compared with traditional telephony. If you operate a multiple site company, VoIP could bring you exceptional benefits.

How does it work?

The technology works by converting the (human) voice to data packets, transmitting it over the internet, indeed any data connection running IP and reconvertng the packets into human voice once it has reached the destination. Normal voice is in an analogue format.

This cannot be carried over data connections, so it is converted into digital sound packets so that it can be carried over the internet. This process is similar to internet technology where a modem is used to convert analogue data into digital and vice versa.

#### **Benefits**

You can speak to more than one person at a time (teleconference). There is also room for interactive video conferencing

Excellent voice quality.

In built firewall for security. This protects your business from telephone fraud.

Cost effective as calls can be compressed.

Saves money on cabling.

Protects your investment: Excellent disaster recovery

Please check our VOiP FAQs or call us on 0845 055 2070 for more information on how VOiP can benefit your organisation.

None



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