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VoIP i½ A Current Comparison of Skype vs Vonage

By Andrew Johnson

You have read about VoIP and wish to utilize the service either to get free calls to friends also using the service or for full telephony abilities. Either way, what is the current offers from two big VoIP providers? This article will do a comparison of the three VoIP providers to give the reader a starting point of where they may wish to look for a service.

Skype

With Skype calls to other Skype clients are free regardless of location.

However if you wish to make calls to non Skype clients then this is called i½SkypeOuti½. Calls can be made to the 20 most popular call destinations for the one SkypeOut global rate. At the time of writing this rate was 1.7 Euro Cents per minute equating to about 2 US cents or 1.1 pence. With SkypeOut there is no line rental and no contract fees.

The SkypeOut global rate includes the following countries:

Argentina (Buenos Aires), Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Canada (mobiles), Chile, China (Beijing, Guanzhou, Shanghai, Shenzhen), China (mobiles), Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hong Kong (mobiles), Ireland, Italy, Mexico (Mexico City, Monterrey), Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland (Poland, Gdansk, Warsaw), Portugal, Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg), Singapore, Singapore (mobiles), South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan (Taipei), United Kingdom, United States (except Alaska and Hawaii) and United States (mobiles).

It should be noted that unless specifically mentioned, this rate is only applicable to regular landline telephones with mobiles more expensive. However note that Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and United States are listed under the SkypeOut global rate for calling mobiles.

Other destinations are available and it would be advisable to check this rate prior to obtaining credits or calling.

Skype voicemail is available for a fee of 5 Euro for 3 months or 15 Euro for 12 months.

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SkypeIn is where you wish to have a conventional phone number so you can be called from conventional phones. The fee for this service is 10 Euro for 3 months and 30 Euro for 12 months. Voicemail is included free if you subscribe to SkypeIn.

(source :

www.skype.com

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Vonage

Vonage provides local and long distance calling anywhere in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico for the one price with calls to select European countries free with their unlimited plans.

In this article the two lowest fee packages will be examined.

Basic 500 – This includes 500 minutes for outgoing calls in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico for \$14.99 a month. Unlimited minutes for incoming calls and 3.9 cents for each additional minute over 500 outgoing minutes with rates for other destinations.

Premium Unlimited Plan – This plan allows for unlimited local and long distance calls anywhere in the US, Canada, Puerto Rico and select European countries (some included below).

Included features in both plans are:

- Voicemail Plus
- 3-Way Calling
- Call Waiting
- Call Forwarding
- Caller ID with Name
- 911 Dialing
- Free phone adapter if you sign up directly from Vonage

Current (per minute) rates have been obtained to compare against the SkypeOut destinations:

Argentina (Buenos Aires) – 5411 – \$0.05

Australia – 61 – \$0.05 (other prefixes may be more expensive)

Austria – 43 – \$0.07 (other prefixes may be more expensive)

Belgium/Brussels – 32 & 322 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be more expensive)

Chile – 56 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be more expensive)

China (Beijing) – 8610 – \$0.06 (Guangzhou) – 8620 – \$0.10 (Shanghai) – 8621 – \$0.10 Denmark – 45 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be more expensive)

Estonia – 372 – \$0.07 (cellular and premium) – 3725, 37270 – \$0.45)

France – 33 – \$0.04 (free on unlimited plans) (other prefixes may be more expensive)

Germany – 49 – \$0.04 (other prefixes may be more expensive)

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Greece 30 – \$0.07 (other prefixes may be more expensive)
Hong Kong 852 – \$0.04, Hong Kong (mobiles) – \$0.04
Ireland 353 – \$0.06 (free on unlimited plan) (other prefixes may be more expensive)
Italy 39 – \$0.04 (free on unlimited plan) (other prefixes may be more expensive)
Mexico 52 – \$0.12 (other prefixes in Mexico may be cheaper)
Netherlands 31 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be more expensive)
New Zealand 64 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be more expensive)
Norway 47 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be more expensive)
Poland 48 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be same or more expensive)
Portugal 351 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be same or more expensive)
Russia – 7, 70–72, 74–78, 734 – \$0.12
Singapore 65 – \$0.05, Singapore (mobiles & premium) – 23223, 23230, 23233, 23235, 23240, 23250, 23276–77 – \$0.05
South Korea 82 – \$0.06 (other prefixes may be cheaper or more expensive)
Spain 34 – \$0.06 (free on unlimited plan)
Sweden 46 – \$0.06
Switzerland 41 – \$0.06
Taiwan (Taipei) 886, 8862 – \$0.06
United Kingdom 44 – \$0.04 (free on unlimited plan)
(Source:

www.vonage.com

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Summary

It is hoped that from the information provided, each individual can relate their own circumstances and call patterns to establish which one of these two VoIP providers would be the best fit if it was down to

the two. It must be remembered there is a vast range of VoIP providers.

Whilst all care has been taken, it is advised to confirm all rates and information via each individual VoIP provider.

The Author has an Associate Diploma in Electronic Engineering. For further information, books or VoIP items, please visit

All About Voice Over Internet Protocol

VOIP: A Basic, Basic Intro

By Bear Cahill

VOIP: A Basic, Basic Intro by Bear Cahill

What is it?

Most people are familiar w/ NetMeeting and other software that let you talk to others over the internet. VOIP is similar. However, it also uses your phone – the interface we're all familiar with.

Instead of connecting your phone to the wall, you connect it to a box either the VOIP company provides or you buy on your own. This is the modem. You need highspeed/broadband internet for this. Your modem plugs into your cable/dsl modem and now it can 'talk' btwn your phone and the internet.

Your phone lines already do pretty much what VOIP does, just w/ different/older technology (well, some of it's new w/ optics and such, but...).

How hard is it to setup?

It's actually very easy. Assuming you have the company send you a modem or you buy a kit at the store, you simply plug the modem btwn your current cable/dsl modem and your computer (e.g., the out from your cable modem now goes to the new box and the out from that to your computer). It also has a phone jack for your regular phone.

Once it is on, it will boot up and configure itself.

What are the benefits?

There are many benefits depending on the company you go w/, but here are a few I have (all of these are free w/ the monthly fee– \$14.99 for my setup):

1. Features like caller id, call waiting, call waiting caller id, call forwarding, etc.
2. Voicemail
3. Email alerts for new voicemail.
4. Web access to voicemail – you can play your messages on your computer.
5. Auto–forward – if the phone is ever down or isn't answered, it's auto–routed to another number
6. Online management of all features, settings, account, etc.
7. Computer dialing – highlight any number on your computer, hit F6 and it sets up the call from your phone to theirs – very convinient!
8. Keep your regular phone (you don't need a voip phone)

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There are some other cool features available for extra \$ like the softphone which lets you use your computer as a phone w/o the modem – this means you can take your laptop w/ you wherever and you have your phone w/ the same phone number everywhere too (you can do this w/o the softphone, but you have to take your VOIP modem around w/ you – not bad if you're going somewhere for a longer trip).

Another really cool thing is the virtual phone numbers. You can get extra numbers that ring the same phone, but they are local numbers to any area code you want. So if I live in Dallas and have family in New York, I can get a local phone number here and there. That way my family in New York can call a local number (free) and talk to me! Vonage charges \$4.99/month for that. I'm not sure about the others.

And the biggest benefit – IT'S CHEAP! I pay \$14.99 plus some tax and such, but not the ump–teen taxes, charges, fees, etc. like the phone company charges.

Also, if you do a little research/reading, you can set it up to where every phone jack in your house is wired for VOIP. It's little more than plugging the output of your VOIP modem into the wall jack you already have. Very little more.

Bottom Line

You get lots of good, free features and options for doing/managing a lot more including a lot over the web and it's SO much cheaper (at least it is for me!). Being the 'average guy' I am, I don't really use all the features. Fortunately, it's pretty much a 'set it up and forget about it' type thing except that I save \$40+/month w/ it!

I use Vonage b/c that's what I was told about first and it was one of the first. There are others and I'm sure they have their strengths, but Vonage has the cheapest base option at the time I did my research.

Bear Cahill runs: The Armchair Geek (www.thearmchairgeek.com), Webpage Hosting Info (www.webpagehostinginfo.com), Go To College Online (www.gotocollegeonline.com) and The Video Exchange Community (www.videoexchange.org)



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