

Three reasons why you are going to hate VoIP

VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol, is rapidly becoming a top choice for people wishing to avoid costly telephone service. The system works by allowing you to make phone calls using a computer network, such as your Internet provider. Depending on where you live, you may be able to keep your phone number. The service typically offers some type of unlimited long distance calling within certain areas (such as within the continental U.S. or throughout Western Europe), for a set fee. Many also offer minute-by-minute charges. People who are interested in VoIP are drawn to the lower monthly fees. Also, depending on the provider you choose, package deals are available that combine both Internet and phone service. This can save both money and reduce the number of monthly bills. So if Voice over IP is so great, what are the drawbacks? The following are three reasons why you might hate VoIP.

Power Outages and Other Emergencies

One key aspect to VoIP is that, if you switch over your whole phone service, you may not have any way of making 911 emergency phone calls. Some providers are working around this problem, but before signing up and changing your service, inquire if there is a way to make emergency calls. This is particularly important if you don't have a cell phone or if you disconnect your landline completely. (Some people use Voice over IP for long distance only and keep a local number through the landline.)

Unless your provider offers some type of back-up system (some do come with a back-up battery for emergencies), if your power goes out, so does your phone. One very convenient aspect to the landline is that you can still make phone calls when the power is down. This can be a nice sense of security and allows people to check in during long power outages.

It's a New Technology

Even though VoIP has been in the works for a few years, it's still a new technology. One of the primary complaints by current users is that Voice over IP calls often have a buzzing tone in the background or an echo when speaking. While these problems are not serious, they can be annoying. If you're used to a quality landline connection, the change to VoIP may be disappointing.

Further, because it is a newer technology, providers will continue to make improvements. This will obviously increase quality, but also drive prices competitively as providers seek to gain your business. Therefore, if you are considering VoIP service, avoid being locked into a long-term contract. If something better comes along, you'll want the option of changing. Some areas do not have Voice over IP for local calls, for example, so if you opt for VoIP for long-distance service, you'll want the option of switching over your entire service once a local provider is available.

The Service Isn't the Same (Yet)

Phone companies spent years coming up with ways to service customers, such as directory assistance and comprehensive phone book listings. With VoIP, you may not have any type of directory assistance available and you may not have a listing. Prior to signing up for a service, find out what types of support systems are available. Many people take the phone company's service options for granted, so if you rely on directory assistance, you may want to think twice or wait.

In addition, depending on the type of service you choose, you may be only able to call other subscribers. If you make many calls, you don't want a service that limits who you can reach. The types of VoIP services vary considerably, from computer-to-computer calling to options that seem nearly identical to your regular phone service. Read the fine print to find out what is included and what isn't.

Also, keep in mind that in order to use VoIP, you need to have a high-speed Internet connection, such as DSL or cable. If you do not have this, and rarely use the Internet or email, then the cost of using Voice over IP could be quite more than what you are currently paying. If, on the other hand, you already have a high-speed connection, you may be able to bundle your services, including VoIP. It all depends on your needs.

VoIP is the future of calling, so if you decide to wait, you won't miss anything. In fact, the technology and service options will only improve, so if you think that you're going to hate Voice over IP, perhaps you just need to wait a bit longer.

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