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Category: Advantages of VoIP

Subcategory: Advantages of VoIP

Tip: Easiest Way to Make Video Calls: Through Your Computer

Packet8 Tip: When shopping for business phone service, check out the benefits of a video calling system that runs over any Microsoft Windows system for optimum business performance and planning. You can also get free calling to anyone within the Packet8 network and only \$5.99 monthly for 500 minutes of out-of-network video calls.

Tip: VoIP Advantage over Circuit Switching

VoIP technology, a packet-switching technique, uses the Internet to provide phone service and has several advantages over circuit switching. Packet switching allows several telephone calls to occupy the same amount of space that would take up only one phone call on a circuit-switched network. Using the PSTN (public switched telephone network), a 10-minute phone call uses 10 full minutes of transmission time at a cost of 128 kbps. A 10-minute call using VoIP may occupy only 3.5 minutes of transmission time at a cost of 64 kbps. So, those 3.5 minutes leave the other 64 kbps free. In addition, during the 6.5 minutes of silence included in a 10-minute conversation, the 128 kbps capacity can be used in other ways. Another three or four calls could easily fit into the space used by a single phone call using circuit switching. Data compression would further reduce the size of each call.

Category: Business VoIP

Subcategory: Business VoIP

Tip: Business VOIP and PBX? It's Worth Looking Into

Packet8 Tip: The Virtual Office system offers full PBX services in a remotely hosted package, with unlimited calling for \$39.95 per month per line.

Tip: Business VOIP and PBX? It's Worth Looking Into

Business VOIP services have matured to the point where there is often very little difference in service between a business VOIP connection and a traditional business landline PBX service. Many Business VOIP services offer direct-dial phones, call routing, forwarding and conferencing, and unlimited extensions, often as part of remotely hosted plans that are easy to set up and maintain. Meanwhile, VOIP plans offer unique services like web-based calling, portable local numbers and phone-to-email connections. So the answer is yes, Business VOIP can provide full PBX services, often

for rates that are much less expensive than traditional PBX systems.

Tip: Converting Phones Will Cost -- One Way Or Another

Packet8 Tip: Get a new VOIP-friendly office telephone and an adapter for traditional phones with each single-line business plan purchased, easing the transition cost for business VOIP users.

Tip: Converting Phones Will Cost -- One Way Or Another

Converting desktop office telephones for Business VOIP service is an unavoidable expense. You have two choices: You can continue to use most standard office telephones with an adapter that converts phone traffic for delivery over the Internet. Or you can purchase new, VOIP-friendly phones for business use. But one way or another you will have to pay something to convert each office telephone over for business VOIP use.

Tip: Difficult to Install Business VOIP? Not if You Go With a Hosted Solution

Is it difficult to convert your office phone system over to business VOIP? Not if you already have a networked Internet connection for your office that runs to each desktop. If you already have a network set-up, the rest is easy, especially if you go with a hosted solution. If you do not have an Internet network in your office already, your initial investment will be more, but it's a cost you can recoup eventually with monthly savings.

Tip: Five Reasons Why Business VOIP is a Good Idea

Your business should consider VOIP, especially if you've already made an investment in building local and wide-area data networks for your business. Here are five reasons why you should consider VOIP for your business: * Calls are inexpensive, compared to regular phone service. * There's no difference between long distance and local. * Calls can run over an existing data network, and allow you to receive voice mail and faxes with your email. * You can choose your own area code and make and receive calls from anywhere you can get online. * Security is acceptable when using encryption and VPN technology.

Tip: Good for Small Businesses, Too.

Packet8 Tip: Business services are sold per-line, making it easy for even small businesses to take advantage of small business VOIP services.

Tip: Hire an Expert to Help

Business VOIP evolves on Internet time. There are new companies and networks

coming online all the time. If you're considering Business VOIP, hire an expert consultant to help you choose and implement the correct system for you and your business. If you choose your consultant wisely, he will pay for himself with savings on set-up, maintenance and rates. And he or she will be there to help you if and when you need to upgrade or run into trouble. If you're a big business, you probably have the knowledgeable people in your IT staff. It's more of a cost imposition for small businesses, but worth it in the long run.

Tip: Pay Now, Save Later With Business VOIP

With Business VOIP, the major cost is going to come upfront, with installation of business-quality VOIP equipment: phones, switches, routers, etc. Expect to pay a few thousand dollars to set up a small office (5 to 15 extensions) with VOIP hardware. Double the cost to go to 30 to 50 extensions. Some Business VOIP providers offer equipment as part of a contract, but you still have to set it up and make it work with your network. It's hard to report actual rate quotes here, since Business VOIP companies don't like to give them out until you talk to a sales rep. But Business VOIP providers generally charge a single flat rate based on the number of phones used, with no per-charge calls. This can be anywhere from \$50 to more than \$500 monthly. Expect to save anywhere from 50 percent to 90 percent off your current phone bill.

Tip: Some Reasons Why Business VOIP Might Not be a Good Idea

Business VOIP can be incredibly inexpensive, and an especially good alternative for businesses with existing large data networks. But here are some potential negatives to think about before investing in business VOIP: * When the power goes out, so does your phone. You can remedy this with a back-up generator, but a widespread blackout can take down Internet connections as well. * A network or Internet connection failure can mean no phone service, too. * 911 service is iffy. Although VOIP providers have been required by the FCC to come up with workable 911 plans, most VOIP providers are still not fully compliant. * Security: Business VOIP uses the Internet, which is inherently insecure. Encryption and VPN tunneling technologies can go a long way toward easing security concerns, but they will never completely go away.

Tip: Why Business VOIP? For Big-Time Monthly Savings

Packet8 Tip: Packet8 offers tiered business VOIP service plans, for small business/SOHO customers, virtual office customers who want to tie together different outside lines, and full virtual PBX services. Expect to pay no more than \$39.99 per month per line for unlimited service.

Category: Free VoIP

Subcategory: Free VoIP

Tip: Free VOIP: Some Equipment Required

To take advantage of any free VOIP services, you will need to have the following: * An Internet connection: cable, DSL, even dial-up. * A computer connected to the Internet. * A microphone or telephone connected to your computer. A phone will need to use a special adapter to connect to the computer. Some free VOIP companies -- like Skype -- have begun to sell special phones enabled for VOIP service. These phones must be plugged into the host computer via a USB connection to work.

Tip: Talk Free to Other Network Subscribers

Packet8 Tip: A free in-network service can help anyone interested in trying out cable Internet phone for the first time, or act as a second or third line. Packet8 offers SoftTalk basic for free. It's a computer-based service that allows unlimited calling to other SoftTalk subscribers and any Packet8 subscriber.

Category: How VoIP Works

Subcategory: How VoIP Works

Tip: How Hosted IP PBX Works

A PBX system handles routing of multiple phone calls with business-class services: direct-dial extensions, conference-calling, auto-answering with multiple options and ring groups. An IP PBX system offers the same services -- or more services. But instead of running everything through a computer box in your office, many IP PBX systems are hosted by the provider. With a hosted IP PBX solution, all you have to do is purchase the service, access it through your Internet connection, and then configure it yourself through the web. It's much easier and almost always much cheaper than PBX services using traditional landlines.

Tip: How Hosted IP PBX Works

Packet8 Tip: All of Packet8's business IP PBX services are hosted by Packet8, making set-up, configuration and maintenance much easier than with traditional or even non-hosted IP PBX services. If you run into problems, VOIP customer support is only a click away.

Subcategory: VoIP Functions

Tip: Advantage of Packet Switching

Packet switching is a very efficient technology. Instead of sending a constant stream of bytes, a packet-switched phone system sends just the packets of noisy bytes. If neither you nor the person you're talking to are speaking, nothing is transmitted. Packets of data can be sent throughout the network along the least congested and cheapest routes. For the customer this translates into lower cost of service because costs to the provider are so much less.

Tip: Three Ways to Make a VoIP Call

There are three ways to place a VoIP call. You can buy an analog telephone adapter (ATA), buy an IP phone, or talk directly from one computer to another. An ATA is a simple way to start using VoIP. You take the adapter out of the box, plug it in and you're ready to make VoIP calls. If you want to get a little fancier, you can buy an IP phone. It looks like a regular phone but has all the software you need to make IP calls. When Wi-Fi phones become available, you'll be able to make IP calls from any Wi-Fi hotspot. Talking computer to computer is the easiest way to use VoIP. You can get the necessary software free or at very low cost. All you pay is your normal ISP (Internet service provider) fee.

Category: Residential VoIP

Subcategory: Residential VoIP

Tip: Make Sure 911 Works on Your VOIP Service

Emergency 911 access is a concern with Residential VOIP services. Commercial services are being required to come with workable 911 plans, since VOIP services do not automatically work with 911 the way landlines do. But many services still have a long way to go to meet FCC requirements. And free services, like Skype, do not have any 911 service. Make sure you know what a provider offers for 911 access before paying out anything, and consider keeping a cheap second phone line or cell phone as a 911 back-up.

Tip: Make Sure VOIP is Right For You

Considering a move to Residential VOIP? It could be a good move, especially if you make a lot of phone calls. But make sure Residential VOIP is right for you. Before signing anything, make sure you can say "yes" to at least one of the following: * I make a lot of long-distance phone calls from home and would like my monthly bills to be lower. * I don't like paying the taxes that add on costs to my monthly phone bill. * I run a home-based business and would like to reduce my overhead. * I want my local number to look like I am calling from a different city or state (I live in Maine, but I want a NYC

phone number). * I want lots of features -- 3-way calling, call waiting, etc. -- and I don't want to pay any extra for them.

Tip: No Residential VOIP in a Power Outage

Will Residential VOIP service work in a power outage? In a word -- no. Like your computer, the Residential VOIP service requires a modem/adaptor to access the Internet. In a power outage, the modem stays dark and so does anything connected to it. Traditional land lines do not need to be powered from within the home, and can still work in a power outage.

Tip: Residential VOIP: Half the Cost of a Cable Phone

What's the difference between the broadband phone service offered by your local cable company and a residential VOIP service? Price, for one. Time Warner Cable, for example, charges \$39.95 monthly for unlimited digital phone service. But VOIP services offering similar unlimited calling plans can be had for about half that cost, including a free adaptor to use to connect your phone to the Internet.

Tip: Skype: A Solid Secondary Service

In many ways, Skype stands up to hype as a free service. It is truly free, as long as you call other Skype users. And there are no costs for set up or extra hardware. But Skype needs to run through your computer, doesn't have emergency 911 service or phone number portability, and you lose it if the power goes out. So it's best to see Skype as a second service, an ultra-low-cost alternative for long distance and international calls.

Tip: With Cable, You Can't Take It With You

Packet8 Tip: Did you know you can use your laptop computer for broadband phone service? Packet8 residential plans include SoftTalk, which allows you to use your computer as a phone from anywhere, making and answering local calls.

Category: Setting Up VoIP

Subcategory: Setting Up VoIP

Tip: Make Sure to Get a Full-Featured Virtual PBX System

Packet8 Tip: Packet8 virtual PBX systems offer all standard PBX features at no extra cost, as well as special Internet-only enhancements, including a web-based admin system.

Tip: No IT Support? Consider Professional Help

Packet8 Tip: A professional consultant can end up saving you money in the long run, especially if the consultant can get you up and running in less time than it would take you to do it yourself. With a virtual hosted PBX service, Packet8's Virtual Office program is relatively easy to set up and maintain. But if you need help, Packet8 offers an on-site consulting service.

Tip: No IT Support? Consider Professional Help

Now just because setting a a virtual PBX system is supposed to be easy, doesn't mean it will be. This is especially true if you have to extend your Internet network to make the phone system work. So if you think you might have trouble installing a VOIP PBX system yourself -- or if you don't have IT support to lean on -- consider hiring a professional consultant.

Tip: Setting Up Business VOIP? Consider Professional Help

Setting up Business VOIP can be a different animal than setting up VOIP at home. If you've got a home office, or a small business with a simple data network, it probably won't be that difficult to configure VOIP, if you have basic technical knowledge. But if you're looking to set up Business VOIP with a good-sized data network, or set up PBX services, you're definitely going to need the help of a professional setting up VOIP services.

Tip: Take the Hassle Out of PBX: Go Virtual

If you're considering purchasing a VOIP PBX system to replace a current PBX system that uses the traditional land-line network, you're probably worrying about how difficult the changeover and set-up will be. This really depends on a few main factors: * Do you already have an Internet network wired to each desktop that needs a phone? * Do you need to keep the same extension numbers when you switch over to the VOIP PBX system? * Do you plan to buy VOIP-enabled phones? Or will you use current phones with adapters? * Do you plan to purchase a virtual PBX system, or one that you need to set up and configure yourself? If you already have a desktop Internet network, hooked up to a high-speed connection, you are ahead of the game. And one way to avoid messy set-up and configuring of the PBX system is to consider purchasing a hosted or virtual PBX. With a hosted system, the provider takes care of virtually everything. All you have to do is connect your phones to the network and then configure the system via a protected web site.

Tip: Take the Hassle Out of PBX: Go Virtual

Packet8 Tip: A virtual system can take a lot of worries -- let alone cost and time -- away

from anyone who wants to get the advantages of VOIP PBX for their business. Packet8's Virtual Office PBX system is hosted remotely, making it easy to set up and maintain and removing a lot of potential hassles.

Tip: The Easiest Way to Set Up VOIP

The easiest way to set up VOIP is to simply download software and use a computer-based VOIP plan like Skype, or the talk services from MSN, Google, Yahoo or AOL. All you need to do is plug in a headset or microphone and you're ready. With a phone-based plan, the easiest way to set up your service is to use an adaptor -- almost always supplied by the provider. Just plug your phone into the adapter and the adapter into your cable or DSL modem. Setting up, or building onto, a data network is more complicated. It can be done by anyone with some basic tech knowledge. If not, you'll need some help so it's best to hire a professional.

Category: VoIP 911

Subcategory: VoIP 911

Tip: Emergency Check? Dial 933

If you're a Vonage subscriber and you want to know if you've been connected to 911 service, don't dial 911. That will put through an actual 911 call, if the connection has been enabled. Instead dial 933. You will then receive a message telling you if your 911 service is live.

Tip: No 911 with Free VOIP

One big reason why free VOIP services shouldn't be used as primary phones: 911 won't work. While commercial VOIP providers are required to provide 911 service and obtain an accurate physical address to give to 911 providers, free providers are not under the same requirements. So if you're considering free VOIP, make sure you have another service with a 911 connection.

Category: VoIP Accessories

Subcategory: VoIP Accessories

Tip: Get a Phone for Your Computer

You have to call it an accessory, since you CAN make calls without it. But one of the most popular new VOIP accessories available for Residential VOIP networks is a

VOIP-enabled phone. While you can use standard phones with most commercial Residential VOIP services and a special adaptor, VOIP phones plug directly into your computer through a USB connection. You can use these phones with compatible computer-based Residential VOIP service, like Skype, or even Google Talk or MSN or AOL Instant Messenger. Worth it? Depends on how much you use the service like a regular phone. If more than one person uses the VOIP service, it might make sense. Otherwise, you're probably better off with a headset.

Tip: Get Ready for VOIP Keyboard

A new addition to the growing world of VOIP Accessories is the VOIP-enabled keyboard. Expect to see these coming in fall 2006, from PC accessories giant Logitech. These keyboards will be Skype-specific in Europe and optimized for Yahoo and AOL in the US. The keyboard will include dedicated buttons for making and ending calls, as well as speed-dialing. Expect to pay well over \$100 online for one.

Tip: More VOIP Gadgets Coming as Portable WiFi Develops

The market for VOIP Accessories continues to grow. The number of cell phones and portable devices with integrated WiFi has so far been limited. But advances in technology keep accelerating and truly portable WiFi devices are starting to come to market -- the Microsoft Zune music player, set to debut this Christmas season with WiFi, is a good example. And wherever there's WiFi, VOIP and VOIP Accessories sure to follow. So if you don't see a convenient VOIP calling device for you at the moment, it should be arriving soon.

Tip: Using Your Palm for VOIP

If you have a Treo or other Palm device, especially one with a Bluetooth or WiFi connection, you've probably thought 'Why can't I make VOIP calls with this?' After all, VOIP is just another Internet application, right? Now it can happen, thanks to a brand-new addition to the VOIP accessory world from Hampton Software. The software is called Articulation, and it supposedly works with any Palm OS 5.x and above. You'll need an Internet connection and a VOIP provider. But everything else is taken care of, according to the company. This is brand-new software, so you might want to wait until a few reviews come in before going out to buy it. But it sounds very promising.

Tip: You Don't Need a VOIP Phone With Most Residential Services

You definitely do not need to have a special VOIP Phone with your home VOIP service. Virtually all residential VOIP services allow standard phones to be used with special adapters. However, you can purchase a VOIP phone for under \$100, avoid using a special adapter, and take advantage of Internet-only phone services, like video calling.

Category: VoIP Plans

Subcategory: VoIP Plans

Tip: Business VOIP a Solid Investment

VOIP is becoming a solid alternative for business telephony, especially businesses that have already invested in local and wide-area data networks. VOIP can be added onto an existing data network relatively simply, although hardware costs at start-up can cost thousands. And VOIP business plans, with unlimited domestic and low-cost international calling, can mean huge savings for a business. It's not as easy for a business to get cost numbers from providers, since most of these are custom solutions. But for businesses -- from small to large -- a VOIP Plan can be a solid investment.

Tip: International Calls Cost More

Packet8 Tip: Get the most for your office phone system with finding a service with an international calling plan. Packet8 offers international calling plans with unlimited calling to most of Europe, as well as selected countries in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Tip: Local and Long Distance: It's All the Same to Your VOIP Provider

Packet8 Tip: Packet8 VOIP phone service includes free local and long distance calling in all of its residential and business plans, with unlimited free calling to anyone who also uses Packet8 as their VOIP Provider.

Tip: Look for a VOIP Plan with a Trial Period

Most VOIP plans are month-to-month services that do not require signing a contract. Think of it like your cable TV plan. You pay monthly -- usually in advance -- for services and can stop anytime. Make sure your VOIP plan offers the same deal. Even better, look for one with 30 days free or a money-back guarantee. That way, you can try out the service in relative comfort, knowing that you are not making a big commitment, or laying out a lot of cash for a VOIP Plan that doesn't work for you.

Tip: What You Should Pay for a VOIP Plan

So now that you've looked at and considered factors like computer vs. phone plans, 911 and networks used by your frequent calling partners, you can start to look at VOIP plan costs: Expect to pay anywhere from \$15 to \$25 per month for a single VOIP line to your house, along with the cost of your DSL or Internet connection. This should include unlimited free local and domestic long-distance calls and a rate of a few cents per

minute for international calls. But remember all those other factors and features you decided you needed before you looked at costs. Make sure the VOIP plan you choose meets all those needs and isn't just the lowest-cost plan out there.

Category: VoIP Routers

Subcategory: VoIP Routers

Tip: Choosing the Best Brand of VOIP Router: Stay with the Big Names

Who makes the best brand of VOIP routers? It's like asking who makes a better car -- Mercedes or BMW? As long as you stay with the established names in VOIP routers/networking, you'll be fine. Look for LinkSys, D-Link or Motorola. You want to make sure the provider is big enough and well-known-enough to offer a solid product backed by good customer service.

Tip: Go VOIP Router-Less, If You Can Afford It

If you don't want or need a home Internet network, but want to use VOIP, there are some VOIP router-less alternatives. You can buy enabled VOIP handsets that look just like regular phones and plug directly into your cable or DSL modem. Good points: Simple, especially for the computer-phobic. Not so good: It will usually cost you a lot more than if you went with a router/networking set-up.

Tip: Hosted IP Solutions: No Router Required

Packet8 Tip: You won't need to buy a router with Packet8 services. Packet8 customers can connect directly to the Internet with a VOIP phone, or with a standard phone and an adapter.

Tip: If You Already Have a Router, a VOIP Adaptor Bridges Gap

If you already have home network and you want to add VOIP capabilities, you can probably get away with using your current router, without having to purchase a VOIP router. Instead, look at VOIP adaptors. The adaptor plugs into your network router and translates the VOIP call for digital transmission through your network. This can help, especially if you've just invested in an updated wireless router and don't want to switch again. However, you'll still have to pay at least \$60 for an adaptor.

Category: VoIP Security

Subcategory: VoIP Security

Tip: Let the Provider Worry About VOIP Security

Here's an easy way to deal with Voice Over IP security concerns: Let your provider handle them. When purchasing a Voice Over IP plan -- especially a business or PBX plan -- you should seriously consider using a hosted plan. Let the Voice Over IP provider run all your services for you on their server and worry about system security. All you have to do is make sure your own high-speed connection is safe.

Tip: VOIP for Business: A Viable Alternative

VOIP is becoming a serious alternative for business users, especially businesses that have already invested in creating local and wide area networks for their employees. VOIP calls within the network are dirt cheap and as secure as your network itself. The bigger concerns come when VOIP is used for making calls outside the network. You'll want to discuss this with your network security consultant and consider using encryption software, like a VPN (Virtual Private Network).