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## Talk Is Cheap on VoIP



We all take our telephones for granted, but have you looked at the price you are paying for your phone calls? Internet telephony has become a very useful and cost-effective alternative to standard phone service, especially for DSL and Cable users. VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol, is the system of transferring analog audio data (such as what you hear when you make a regular phone call) to digital data that can be transferred across a data line (such as the internet). This is how you are able to make phone calls using your internet connection, and this technology is cheap because you are not connecting to a telephone company: your call goes directly to the person you are dialing. For a basic call, you can download simple programs to connect to another person, or even use your online messenger program (such as MSN Messenger). This is good service because it's free, and during the last few years its audio quality has improved dramatically.

Also, you can be set-up with plans that you pay for (local internet providers are now setting these up). This can be up to 90% cheaper than using your standard phone! You can set yourself up in a similar way to using your cell phone, e.g. minutes per month. This makes international calls very cheap, and the person you are calling does not require the same software (as they would in the free calling programs). Instead you dial their own phone, so they don't even need to be using the internet! You can even do re-directing of telephone numbers using this service, e.g. set yourself up with a telephone number in different country, and every time someone calls that number it is redirected to your home (no matter which country it is). Using special adapters it's also becoming more common to use regular home telephones through a VoIP service too.

What about within your business? VoIP can also transfer across data networks. You can call people that are connected to your network using VoIP, and you won't have to pay anything for it. This can cut costs, especially if you are calling a part of your company situated away from your building, but they are connected to you via a data network. Also, video conferencing can be used in the same way, as long as you have a webcam. You could use video conferencing for meetings with overseas companies, or other branches of your company using the same service, therefore not having to transport your workers around for meetings.

The best thing about this service is that if you are just at home, it doesn't have to cost anything at all, and it's easy as long as you have Windows XP (older versions of Windows need to be set up manually). You don't have to type messages in an online message program such as MSN Messenger or ICQ: you can talk to the person instead. Just as long as the you and person you are talking to has a microphone, an audio device (headphones or speakers), and a sound card, you can have audio conversations over the internet free of charge.

Setting yourself up with a VoIP service can be really useful to save time and money. Your local Computer Troubleshooter will be happy to consult with you about how Internet Telephony can work for you.

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