

Voice Over IP: Should You Switch Your Home Phone?

There's been a lot of talk lately about people switching their home phone service to Voice Over Internet Protocol, or VoIP service. If you aren't familiar with VoIP, it simply is a way to route calls over the Internet instead of traditional telephone lines.

For around \$30-\$40 per month, VoIP may seem comparable in price to your traditional phone service. However, VoIP providers usually include features such as call waiting, caller ID, and voice mail for free. Most will also include unlimited long-distance within the U.S. and Canada. If you frequently call friends, relatives, or clients long distance, this is a great deal. However, if you don't make a lot of long-distance calls, you probably won't see much in the way of savings. So, let's look at the costs...

To use VoIP, you must have a broadband Internet connection such as cable or DSL. If you don't already have a high speed connection in your home, that will be an added cost you must consider. You will also need a VoIP adapter to connect your phone to your broadband modem. Most carriers will provide the adapter for a small fee.

Once you cancel your traditional phone service for VoIP service, the telephone jacks around your home will no longer work. In order to have phones in different rooms, you will need an expandable cordless phone system where the base unit is plugged into the adapter and all other cordless handsets receive a signal from the base unit. Further, to receive calls and surf the Internet simultaneously, you'll need a router. If you have a home network, you probably already have what you need. Otherwise, budget \$50 for one.

Finally, keep in mind that your phone is now run by the Internet. If your Internet service goes down, your phone and 911 emergency services cannot find you. For emergency purposes, make sure you have a cell phone back up.

Have questions about VoIP? Call me at 248-425-0009 or e-mail me at jeff.lipshaw@aficc.com