

Trails End Computer Club

Bulletin for the week of DECEMBER 15, 2013

<p>WEEKLY MEETINGS EACH Wednesday Program or Lesson 9:30 - 10:30 AM One on One Help 10:30-? In the Library</p>	<p>SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS: If you would like to meet in a small group to discuss special computer related subjects or form a Special Interest Group lets discuss it.</p> <p>Our bulletin is also available on line by visiting tecc.apcug.org and clicking on bulletin.</p>	<p>Our weekly program or lesson is intended to be of interest to all computer users.</p> <p>Following the program an allotment of time will be available for one on one help to those who want a better understanding of something done during the presentation.</p>
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Upcoming Events

Wednesday DECEMBER 18, 2013 Meeting

9:15 AM Set up your computer

9:30 AM Lesson #2, Tips and getting comfortable with your computer

10:30 AM One on One help

Alternative Landline Telephone Services



PART 1 of 2

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://ooma.com>

<http://www.ooma.com/rates>

<http://www.magicJack.com>

<http://www.nettalk.com>

<http://www.skype.com/en/>

<http://www.vonage.com>

<http://obihai.com>

<http://www.basictalk.com>

<http://www.timewarnercable.com/en/residential-home/phone/domestic-international-calling-plans.html>

<http://gigaom.com/2012/12/26/over-half-of-american-homes-dont-have-or-use-their-landline/>

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2012/12/27/more-than-half-homes-without-landline/1793823/>

It should come as no surprise to followers of technology that newer technologies always tend to replace older technologies; this process has been going on since the advent of mankind. Of the myriad of technologies widely used today, it should come as no surprise that the traditional hardwired landline telephones, using a basic analog technology well over a century old, are already obsolescent. According to a story in USA Today on December 27, 2012 (quoting an original 12/26/12 article from Gigaom), "More than half of U.S. homes don't have or use landline." The article explains how wireless phones have in many cases totally replaced the copper wired analog phones in the majority of homes. This decline in demand for traditional phone service has not been lost on the likes of AT&T and Verizon, major providers of hardwired phone services. The USA Today and Gigaom articles state, "As the FCC begins its regulatory process to change the rules associated with landline access and telcos like AT&T and Verizon try to get out of the landline business altogether, it's clear that the phasing out of copper-based voice lines will have repercussions that go beyond telephone calls."

While cellular (mobile) telephones have taken away much of the market share (and profitability) of the copper based landline services, the rapid rise in the popularity of alternative phone services utilizing "Voice over Internet Protocol" (VoIP) has indicated that there is still substantial demand for a somewhat fixed telephone service for both home and business users. VoIP phone services are digital, utilize the internet to carry calls rather than the more traditional copper lines, generally offer superior voice quality, and utterly lack the domestic long distance charges still charged by the traditional phone companies. For those making international long distance phone calls, either to or from the United States, most of these VoIP services offer either free or very inexpensive international long distance. Several of the VoIP providers also offer a reasonably priced international flat rate calling plan with unlimited international calling for less than just local calling costs from a traditional phone company. Originally, most of the VoIP providers had difficulty sending and receiving traditional analog FAX messages, but that problem has been resolved, with almost all of the digital carriers now handling FAX machines as well as any other connected phone devices.

Watching TV for more than a few minutes will likely expose the viewer with a host of commercials for alternative phone services. Among the most widely advertised digital phone products and services are MagicJack, Vonage, Time Warner Digital Phone (other similar cable company phone services are promoted by other carriers), Ooma, netTALK, and BasicTalk. While not heavily advertised, but widely known and used in technical circles are Skype and Obihai. Major providers of online chat services, such as Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo! offer voice chat services that are encroaching on telephone services, with the Google Voice service now being used by many users as a replacement for traditional telephone service. Social

networking services, such as Facebook, may also be entering the fray.

I will admit that over the years, I have experimented with several of the devices that can be used to simply connect common home phone (corded or cordless) to the internet in order to make virtually unlimited local and long distance phone calls. Originally, my primary intent was to avoid horrendous long distance charges when my daughters started going away to college. Later, when cell phone plans offered a very limited number of minutes, with additional minutes being very expensive, I needed an alternative method to avoid crippling long distance charges when calling out-of-area family. While our current cell phone plan has a large number of (limited) daytime minutes, with unlimited evening and weekend calling, my primary interest in a VoIP system is to be able to totally replace my antiquated but traditional phone company with a much more cost effective (money saving) alternative that includes virtually unlimited local and domestic long distance calling. By noticing the increasing popularity of the VoIP systems for home use (home users may be able to retain their "old" landline phone number while generating substantial savings), and the exploding use of VoIP based office phones (a service offered by several of the digital phone providers), it seems inevitable that the traditional landline carriers such as AT&T and Verizon may be presiding over a dying technology.

After toying around with several voice-chat services, requiring the use of a headset and boom microphone, my first foray into the more modern VoIP services was with the original version of the magicJack, which I reviewed here in the February 19, 2009 edition of the Examiner. My major complaint about the original magicJack, an issue resolved in a later version, was that it had to be connected to a computer that was turned on in order to function; when my computer was turned off, there was no magicJack service. About two years ago (Examiner, December 23, 2011), I reviewed an updated version of the then new magicJack PLUS, a much improved build that did not require an "always on" computer in order to have full phone access. Newer builds of the device, the latest named "2014 magicJack PLUS", now claim much improved voice quality. The new magicJack PLUS device retails for \$69.95, but is widely available for as low as half that price, and usually included the first year of service. Additional years can be purchased for as little as \$19.95 per year with a multiyear subscription. The PLUS version of the MagicJack is very simple to install and setup; the AC adapter is plugged into a standard power outlet, with the magicJack's USB plug inserted into the AC power source. A standard phone is connected with its phone plug to one port on the magicJack, and a standard Ethernet (network) cable is connected another port on the device. Registration is fast and simple, leading to a dial tone on the now connected telephone. To be fair, before having adequate cell phone minutes, the portability feature of the magicJack was handy as I could make and receive phone calls from wherever I had a decent broadband internet connection. As with almost all of its competitors, magicJack offers many of the same services as traditional landlines, including caller ID, voice mail, and 911 service (E911). The magicJack is arguably the best selling VoIP device because of its heavy advertising and promotions, with the magicJack website claiming over 11 million devices sold.

Prior to the release of the PLUS version of magicJack, I was seeking an alternative that did not require an "always on" computer in order to function full time; I found that device, the netTALK DUO, which I reviewed in length in the Examiner on May 4, 2012. The basic netTALK DUO was less expensive than the magicJack PLUS, priced at \$49.95 retail (commonly available for about a third less), had superior voice quality, with better customer service and tech support than magicJack. The first year of virtually unlimited local and long distance service was included in the price, with additional years of service available for \$29.95; a year of netTALK cost about the same as a month of basic landline service from the traditional phone companies. Portable, with almost all of the features of a landline (e911, voice mail, caller ID, etc.) I preferred the netTALK over the magicJack. A new model, the netTALK DUO WiFi (\$64.95), offers the option of connecting to any available WiFi service rather than connecting to a router via Ethernet cable.

Next week, in Part 2, read about some of the newer VoIP services including Ooma, BasicTalk, Obihai, Skype, Vonage, and the digital phone services offered by the cable companies.

Interesting Internet Finds - August

Compiled by Steve Costello, President / Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL

September 2013 issue, Boca Bits <http://ctublog.sefcug.com/> editor@brcs.org

In the course of going through the more than 200 RSS feeds, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during the month of August 2013.

Sandboxes Explained: How They're Already Protecting You and How to Sandbox Any Program

<http://www.howtogeek.com/169139/sandboxes-explained-how-theyre-already-protecting-you-and-how-to-sandbox-any-program/>

Print Files Remotely in Windows with Google Cloud Print

<http://www.maketecheasier.com/print-files-remotely-in-windows-with-google-cloud-print/2013/07/31>

Don't Get "Smished": How Scammers are Targeting Your Smartphone

<http://www.dailybits.com/sms-phishing/>

How to install a fully portable desktop on a USB for on-the-go access

<http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/linux-and-open-source/how-to-install-a-fully-portable-desktop-on-a-usb-for-on-the-go-access/>

How To Use Skype to Share Your Computer Screen

<http://www.groovypost.com/howto/skype-share-computer-screen/>

Ultimate Windows 8 Wi-Fi Troubleshooting Guide

<http://www.online-tech-tips.com/windows-8/ultimate-windows-8-wifi-troubleshooting-guide/>

Stop Android 4.3 from always scanning for Wi-Fi networks

http://howto.cnet.com/8301-11310_39-57596807-285/stop-android-4.3-from-always-scanning-for-wi-fi-networks/

How to Return a Lost Phone in Four Easy Steps

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/how-you-can-return-someones-lost-phone-by-thinking-like-a-thief/>

How to Fix Annoying Multi-Page Articles All Over the Web

<http://lifehacker.com/how-to-fix-annoying-multi-page-articles-all-over-the-we-1164869508>

Most Fridays, more interesting finds will be posted on the Computers, Technology, and User Groups Blog, under Creative Commons licensing.

Recent posts:

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/interesting-internet-finds-august-23-2013/>

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/interesting-internet-finds-we-august-16-2013/>

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/interesting-internet-finds-we-august-9-2013/>

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/interesting-internet-finds-we-august-2-2013/>

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Share your computer experiences with other members. We need articles to publish in the TECC Bulletin each week.

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