

Response from: Dave Howarth
Responding on behalf of: Self

Here are my views on your VoIP proposals, based on your plain English summary (I found your web site so confusing that I haven't read anything else).

I am glad to see that you believe the right thing to do is to use minimal regulation. I believe that allowing free choice to individuals and as far as possible to providers is the best policy.

I do have a few questions about the way you see the technology being used:

-1- What is a 'provider', in your view? If I have a VoIP device and the person with whom I wish to communicate has a VoIP device, we can communicate directly, with no need of a 'provider'. Why then do you seem to suggest that 'providers' are needed in all cases?

-2- What I *do* need to know is the address of the other party. This can of course be obtained by some lookup table given a 'number' published by the other person. But my ISP already provides this type of service, called DNS, and there are many possible ways to implement directory services to perform the translation. Indeed companies already do this.

-3- If the emergency services acquire VoIP technology, place it on the net and publish the address, why does anybody else have to 'provide' 999 service? There appears to be no 'provision' to be done?

-4- I agree that there will be a need for PSTN <=> VoIP gateways. These can be operated commercially and charged on a call-by-call or subscription basis. Or given away free by PSTN providers desperate to hold on to their customers. Is this what you mean by 'providers'?

Or are you in fact talking about attempting to restrict my freedom by *requiring* me to use a 'provider' to make voice calls over the net even though I don't need or want to?

On another topic, the most valuable feature to me in choosing a service provider and, I believe, the best way to ensure that the service provider gives me good service, is to guarantee my freedom of choice.

Specifically, I would like to see:

- legislatively guaranteed full number portability, so that if I decide the provider is not giving good service, I am able to choose another without inconvenience.

- legislatively guaranteed freedom to terminate contracts, so that if I decide the provider is not giving good service, I am able to choose another without penalty.

I am led to these views by previous and current experiences with the regulated telecoms industry in this country:

- poor experiences with number portability, especially in regard to BT and the microwave PSTN carrier that went bankrupt (forgot the name!)

- lack of full inbound and outbound migration from all broadband providers

- contradictory statements (lies?) from BT about migrating from their broadband service

- lack of mobile signal coverage - I live in a town but still can't get signal coverage in my house.

- backsliding on legislative obligations - NTL were permitted to cable our street only on condition they would connect to everybody. When I actually tried to get connection, they refused (the connection box is 20' away on the other side of a shared drive). Apparently because the law had been changed to remove that obligation from them.

Thanks a lot, regulators!

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Dave Howorth