

Vonage: Not For Me, But Still A Service To Consider

Well, after using Vonage for almost two months, we decided to cancel our Vonage service and remain with Bell South. Unfortunatly our situation is a bit different from many others, so your experience could be quite different. So read on to see why we canceled and why I still recommend Vonage as an excellent phone service alternative. That may sound like a contratiction, but itâ??s notâ?¦

jimstips.com

There was no one major reason for our cancelling Vonage. Our decision came from a number of smaller issues that, after reviewing â??the big pictureâ?•, caused us to decide that despite the added cost of Bell South phone service, its reliability and quality outweighed the issues we were having with Vonage. Here are the issues we have been dealing with:

1. NO LOCAL NUMBER ISSUE
The first issue we had was the lack of a local number within our local calling area. Vonage did provide numbers within our area code, but they exist outside our local calling area. Not having a local number presented the following issues:

-11 Digit Dialing
Local callers must dial 11 digits when dialing our Vonage number. I am originally from the Chicago area which has had â??overlayâ?• area codes for several years requiring dialing 11 digits. It was a no-brainer because everyone had to do it. Call New Mexico: 11 digits. Call across the street: 11 digits. Simple.

In Anderson, SC however, the norm is currently 7 digits, so it was confusing and inconvenient when giving out our number and expecting people to reach us the first time. Of course itâ??s not rocket science, but was a minor hassle.

-In-State Toll Charges
Because the Vonage number resides outside our local calling area, anyone within our local area who dials our number got hit with an in-state toll charge. Again, not a huge deal, but I personally donâ??t like the idea of pushing off these added costs to the caller when they would otherwise be covered under my phone plan had we had a local number.

-No Phonebook Listing
This issue wasnâ??t apparant at first. It turns out that because the Vonage phone number is â??ownedâ?• by Vonage and is â??leasedâ?• to Vonage customers, there is really no easy way to get a new Vonage phone number listed in the local phonebook. Some may find this a blessing as it may reduce telemarketing callers, but we found this to be an issue. We moved to a â??small-townâ?• community that relies on these types of resources. Again, not a huge issue. Note that if you â??portedâ?• or â??transferredâ?• your number, this should be a non-issue. This only affects â??newâ?• Vonage numbers. Because our number could not be transferred due to lack of local number availability, we had to go with a new number.

-CALLERID NOT â??ACCURATEâ?•
Again, this seems to be an issue similar to the phonebook issue. Our CallerID information displays as â??Unknown Numberâ?• and then our Vonage phone number on recipientsâ?? CallerID boxes. I find this pretty lame. Given current technology, Vonage customers SHOULD be able to have their Account Name displayed on the CallerID regardless if the number was â??newâ?• or â??transferredâ?•. While I do understand the reasons behind it, the reasons are really more political and administrative than technical. Obviously, this is not Vonageâ??s fault as such, but itâ??s still an annoyance.

jimstips.com

-911 REGISTRATION A PROBLEM
According to Vonageâ??s response to my 911 registration request, our address â??failed [their] 911 Address Matching Test.â?• so our 911 registration was declined. Apparantly, we live in a county area that currently does not exist in the 911 system. I will definitely persue this issue because it could also affect our Bell South line. Again, this is not Vonageâ??s fault, but given current technology, this should be transparant to the user.

Looking at these specific issues, you could conclude that they are not necessarily â??show-stopperâ?• issues, and you would be correct. What concerns me is that while Iâ??m very tech-savvy, â??Joe Sixpackâ?• would certainly have a tougher time dealing with and understanding these issues.

2. CALL QUALITY ISSUE
Simply put, my wife and I were disappointed with Vonageâ??s call quality. Overall, itâ??s pretty good, but depending on the call, there were often noticable delays, occasional â??choppyâ?• voice, and occasional dropped connections. Because I had my Phone Adapter located behind my router for security reasons, I couldnâ??t take advantage of QoS, so calls were more often than not affected during heavy Internet activity. Despite having 3000/256 Cable Modem service, the call quality was never on par with that of Bell South. I did not try lowering the bitrate on the Dashboard, and maybe that would have improved things, but I also didnâ??t want to sacrifice voice quality.

The good news (and Iâ??m not being cynical here) is that if you are used to and satisfied with Cellphone quality service such as occasional voice delay, intermittent choppy voice, occasional dropouts, and the occasional lack of service, then you will be right at home with Vonage. I seriously believe that if you are happy with cellphone quality, then you will be happy with Vonage. However, if you prefer POTS quality, then you may be disappointed. Again, your milage may vary depending on your particular setup.

3. LINE RELIABILITY ISSUE
OK, so the fact that three hurricanes recently swept through the Southeast is truely not a normal occurrance, but unfortunatly, our cable went out twice during that two week period due to weather-related issues rendering Vonage phone service useless. Our Bell South line remaind â??onâ?• during the outage. My Cable Modem, Router, and Phone Adapter were connected to an Uninterruptable Power Supply (which was an added cost), so THAT portion of the system stayed â??onâ?•, but because no Internet connection was available, the Vonage phone service was unavailable. To be fair, in this case, the problem was NOT with Vonage, but our Cable provider.

CONCLUSION
OK, all that said, please understand that MOST of our issues have to do with our specific proximity and the fact that no local number was available. My original intent for Vonage was to save some money over our Bell South bill. Obviously, from a money-savings perspective, Vonage wins hands-down being certainly more cost-effective. That said, after dumping our second business line and re-working our long distance package, we are currently paying just about $50.00 per month with Bell South. Yes, itâ??s more costly than Vonage, but itâ??s still a HUGE savings over what we were paying previously. For us the added cost and stability of Bell Southâ??s service outweighs the issues we have been having with Vonage.

jimstips.com

Another thing to understand is that unlike the POTS line that relies on its own internal managed system, Vonage relies on the integrity of other interconnected, unregulated systems. Overall, this may not be a big issue, but it is a real consideration.

I also want to mention that when we lived in Chicago, we had Cable TV, Internet, and Phone service provided by Comcast Cable (formerly AT&T Broadband.) Their phone service was really not much different from Vonage in that it was VoIP, but all technical details (specifically QoS) were handled by Comcast. Their service was nothing short of stellar.

In conclusion, I have to say that the Vonage service is an excellent phone service alternative. With inexpensive features like a Web-based user-controllable Dashboard, almost real time detailed billing, a portable phone adapter, and the availability of virtual numbers, Vonage certainly provides a lot for the money. If you are willing to deal with some minor issues, then Vonage is really a great deal and I highly recommend it. For some, the cost savings alone is well worth it. To us, however, Vonage did not offer the same reliability, quality, and convenience that we have come to expect from POTS phone services like Comcast Phone or Bell South have provided us.

By all means, give Vonage a try. We gave it a chance, and for us, it wasnâ??t the right solution, but it may well be for you.

Category

1. Vonage Tips

Tags

1. case

2. find
3. news
4. review
5. Vonage

Date
11/09/2026
Date Created
10/19/2004

jimstips.com