

By Craig McGuire



News emerged recently that Google is planning a web browser-based application for Google Voice to operate on its Apple's iPhone platform.

This apparent about-face comes in the wake of recent scrutiny from the Federal Communications Commission, which is looking into [Apple's decision](#) less than two months ago to reject Google Voice — citing the application's duplication of iPhone features.

According to a new report from *New York Times* technology writer [David Pogue](#), "Already, Google says it is readying a replacement for the Google Voice app that will offer exactly the same features as the rejected app—except that it will take the form of a specialized, iPhone-shaped web page. For all intents and purposes, it will behave exactly the same as the app would have; you can even install it as an icon on your Home screen."

Google Voice may cut significantly into Skype's market share, although this could be temporary competition if [Skype](#) will no longer be in business.

But is Google Voice the superior web communications tool?

Google acquired the communications technology in 2007, when it purchased GrandCentral. Relunched as Google Voice, the software provides a single number that serves as a communications catch basin for home, office and mobile phones, including voicemail and SMS messages from any device (phone or the web).

While there is some overlap, Google Voice differs from Internet-based phone services, such as Skype, which require a Wi-Fi connection.

"Google Voice is not a phone service, and you'll still need a phone service in order to use Google Voice," clarifies Google spokesperson Sara Jew-Lim. "Our goal is really to give you more control over your communications by providing one phone number that links all of your phones."



Self-avowed Skype cheerleader Jim Courtney, editor and publisher, Voice On The Web, sees Google Voice as a “number management” offering with some voice mail enhancements and SMS messaging support.

“I have been involved with VoIP services since 1995 and I have watched many players come and go,” Courtney says, though is not as quick to dismiss Google Voice. “I have experience with Google Talk, and am a fan of Google Mail for a variety of reasons. Search is becoming the number one feature one needs to see supported in all social media applications, including conversation applications. But it will be a long time before Google Voice and Skype should be mentioned in the same breath as having comparable offerings.”

Jonathan Kay of Grasshopper, a player in the “Virtual PBX” industry for years, sees a niche for Google Voice. “While Skype is made for computer use, Google Voice is much better for consumer and cell phone use, so it could truly serve as more of a phone number than a Skype account could, especially with Google Voice’s new iPhone/Blackberry App.

“Because Google is such a big company they can eat some of the costs of providing this business that other companies could not,” Kay says. “For instance it costs nearly 25 cents a number to hold the millions upon millions of numbers Google Voice is holding. I don’t think competition is a big factor here. Google Voice will never be a competitor with people like Grasshopper or RingCentral, because it’s a free service.”

Stay tuned.

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