

About.com Voice Over IP Guide

Phonebooth Free - Free Local Phone Number That Can Ring Multiple Phones

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March 11 2010

Phonebooth Free is an interesting phone service for small businesses. The service offers a free phone number for your area that you channel incoming calls to up to five different phones, fixed and mobile. It poses as a serious alternative to Google Voice, and also offers a paid upgrade for outgoing calls. The Phonebooth Free service is offered by Bandwidth.com, which is a major player on the [VoIP](#) market. The features offered for free is comparable to Google Voice and its paid rates are around the market's average.



What Phonebooth Free Offers

Phonebooth Free is a product of Bandwidth.com, which is a major player in the VoIP arena. This gives the service flexibility over offered packages and on prices. Here are the main features offered in the Phonebooth Free service:

- A free phone number in your area.
- An incoming call on that number can ring several phones simultaneously. Up to 50 phones can ring at the same time, which, in this scenario, equates to unlimited.
- 200 free minutes of inbound calling. Each minute above that costs 6 cents, which is a good rate compared to the industry's average.
- Auto attendant. This is a mechanism that asks callers to press 1 for this and 2 for that and 3 for that other...
- Voicemail can be transcribed to text messages and even send as email.
- Incoming calls can be forward to any phone, including your mobile phone.
- Rich and user-friendly web interface that allows you to manage your account.
- Contact Plus Widget – this is a click-to-call object that you put on your website to have your customers click on it to call you directly on your Phonebooth number. This is a great thing for business with an important presence on the web.

Phonebooth Free Service Cons

What's a review without a list of cons? But to be realistic here, you cannot complain about not having things when you get so much for free. But you will see some cons when you compare the service with others of the same kind, like [Google Voice](#) and [3Jam](#).

- Phonebooth is available only in the US. I inquired with them and the marketing manager told me they have no plan to expand, but are tracking demands in other areas.
- There is no call recording... yet. Bandwidth.com says it is on their roadmap.
- The system is closed. In contrast, 3Jam, for example, provides an API for programmers. But Bandwidth.com informed me of a coming [softphone](#), which should open it a little bit more, like with calls from abroad.
- When you use the service to make an outgoing call (with OnDemand, see below), you can't have your number appear on the receiver's caller ID.

Compared with Google Voice

Phonebooth Free offers more or less the same features that Google Voice offers, for free. However, small businesses will want to consider Phonebooth for the possibility to upgrade to Phonebooth OnDemand, which is kind of a premium service that allows unlimited outgoing calls and some other more features for \$20 a month. This compares favorably to other service providers like Vonage which claims \$24 but lacks the multiple ringing option. Unlike Google Voice, Phonebooth is a fully VoIP service and leverages of the strength of Bandwidth.com's VoIP network.

Google Voice's advantages are that it offers call recording on the calls and allows you to port your existing number to the service. Also, while Google Voice is considering expanding the service for users in other countries (other than the US), Phonebooth has no plans for expansion.

Phonebooth OnDemand - The Paid Part

With Phonebooth Free, you can only receive calls. To make calls, you would normally pay for a VoIP service, and would then have a different number. Upgrading to Phonebooth OnDemand makes things more interesting, both practically and financially. The \$20 it costs per month compares advantageously with most VoIP service providers since for this amount it offers free unlimited calling over the US. There are also interesting rates for international outbound calls.

Phonebooth OnDemand includes the following additional features:

- Unlimited local and long distance calls
- Supports [HD](#) VoIP
- Supports [IP Phones](#)
- Can handle conference calls
- Round the clock customer support
- Toll free and international plans