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**Paying Too Much For Long Distance (I.E., More Than Zero) ?**

Posted by [David DeJean](#), Jul 11, 2007 10:46 AM



When I wrote about a gaggle of new VoIP services recently (see [Review: 6 Skype Alternatives Offer New Services](#)) I stumbled into one of those subcultures that proliferate around the Web. You know, like The People Who Collect Old Coffee Cans and so on. This one was The People Who Make Free International Calls. Comments added to the article and emails I've gotten have added several services that offer free or cheap VoIP calling to my list.

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While "free or cheap" wasn't exactly the point of my article (I was more interested in new features and marketing gimmicks that push VoIP beyond the [Skype](#)/[Vonage](#) business models) it seems to be on the minds of a lot of people.

Commenter "jane.ninehan," among others, found a service I reviewed, Jajah, "clumsy and expensive" and recommended [Raketu](#) instead. The service "is like Skype and Jajah embedded in one. (Can make calls from software as well as web-based). Better communication, lowest price, and great customer support."

"globalconnect" responded by offering [Rebtel](#), a service that "provides free calls from your landline or mobile phone to your contact list, and if your friend is not on your contact list - their rates are even lower than Jajah or Skype! The solution is simple and requires no downloads, no waiting for a third party connection...Their service could not be easier to use or easier to love!"

"Niaz" sent me an e-mail to recommend [Betamax](#), which turns out to be not just one service, but a lot of them, each with slightly different offerings and pricing and names like VoIPStunt and VoiceTrading. "I used Skype to call internationally everyday," he wrote, "until I found out way better alternatives, particularly those created by Betamax. They do not offer all the features of Skype, but they make it up with unbeatable pricing. They offer 300 minutes of free calls a WEEK to 50 different countries, and even those when those weekly allocations get used up, they cost around a cent a minute." Niaz recommends SMSDiscount and VoIPBuster in particular.

The Betamax services have created a little sub-subculture of their own. Because the Betamax sites are so hard to tell apart, several Web sites have sprung up to track the services and their pricing. Robert Siemer does a nice table of services and rates at [www.backsla.sh/betamax](#). (It comes from Europe, so the prices are in eurocents per minute without VAT.) He claims on his page that it is "the only one available and automatically updated on a daily basis!"

Not quite the only one, perhaps: Another rate table for the major Betamax services is available at [progx.ch](#), and it shows rates for either landlines or mobiles in either euros or dollars.

One more table, then I'll quit: [myvoipprovider.com](#) shows a "Summary of VoIP Providers offering free VoIP calls" that includes several Betamax sites as well as Raketu and others.

It's interesting to note the Betamax services' prices for calls to Egypt. When I was in college, my girlfriend's parents lived in Cairo, and a three-minute phone call from the States cost \$50. According to Robert Siemer's chart you can make that call today for 10.27 cents a minute. That's the kind of impact the Internet has had on the world.

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