

# Fixed-line yesterday, VoIP today, mobile VoIP tomorrow?

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By: [NMK](#) Created on: **October 12th, 2011**

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As smartphone users grow at an exponential rate, it's inevitable that more and more will prefer mobile VoIP as their platform of choice to connect the many ways we communicate. By Tanveer Sharif.

## By Tanveer Sharif

Mobile VoIP will become the next major means of communication; all the evidence is pointing towards this and rightly so. The 90s saw the rising popularity of mobile phones, followed by web conferencing software such as NetMeeting and eventually Skype in the middle of the last decade. Today, with the large growth in broadband-capable mobile devices, the next phase in mobile communications is mobile VoIP.

What mobile VoIP actually does is bypass the many traditional costs of fixed-line calling by turning analog audio signals into digital data and then transmitting it via the internet, making communication much cheaper for us all.

Up until now, some major obstacles to achieving mobile VoIP connectivity have been limited 3G coverage, carrier data-caps and fluctuating mobile broadband speeds. But with the gradual implementation and spectacular speeds of LTE 4G networks and the overall increase and better performance of 3G/Wi-Fi coverage, we no longer need the old-fashioned Skype-to-Skype model for desktops and notebooks to communicate. We now have this same capability on our mobile devices. Just in time as well, as smartphone users are growing at an exponential rate - 55% year-on-year in 2011 according to [IDC](#).

But what benefits does mobile VoIP actually bring to the end-user? Well, there are several advantages, such as:

- Enabling the various ways in which we communicate with one another: voice, IM, social communities, SMS, email, to be accessed by one device over a single platform
- Enabling the various media we want to share: video, music, films, images, to be accessed by one device over a single platform
- Providing significantly cheaper international communications (including free calls between Wi-Fi to Wi-Fi or Wi-Fi to desktop users)
- Giving users the freedom to communicate around the world directly from their mobile phone
- Flexibility, due to compatibility with 3G, 4G and Wi-Fi

- One global phone number (that remains the same wherever you are or what device you are on)

### **How will things change?**

As 4G trials spread across Europe and the US, such as with the recent BT/Everything Everywhere trial in Cornwall ([BBC](#)) and Verizon's nation-wide rollout in the US, mobile broadband is set to eventually match standard broadband speeds. 4G is expected to deliver up to 100mb/s and tests have showcased positive results that will take mobile VoIP to the next level.

With broadband now becoming a basic human right according to the UN Human Rights Council, it makes sense that taking advantage of internet-powered services on your mobile will become the norm. Smartphones have already absorbed most of our media needs and web-apps and mobile apps are paving the way for future content, eliminating the need for previous devices such as mp3 players, cameras and even PCs in many instances.

Mobile VoIP is in addition, solving many of the communication challenges we once faced. For example, when travelling, using your mobile used to mean having to change your SIM card or face high roaming charges. Mobile VoIP enables travelers to avoid this by simply connecting via Wi-Fi.

### **Current problems**

Existing and continuous problems we face, particularly in the UK, are the limited data plans that most mobile carriers offer, coupled with erratic 3G coverage due to the large volume of new smartphone users in parts of the UK, such as in London. This last challenge, however, is not due to an overabundance of people calling but because of the tremendous amount of video transmitted. Mobile VoIP can solve this.

Mobile VoIP not only provides a platform that enables us to merge the many ways we communicate, but it also enables us to successfully transmit and support the many types of media we wish to share, like video, music, movies, images, voice and more.

In other words, mobile VoIP is not a challenger to telcos but more a solution to bigger and better services. Mobile VoIP should be viewed as the bridge that connects the many media we want to access with the traditional services that telcos provide, like voice and messaging, together with the many ways we love to communicate, like IM and social sites.

Because of this, I believe that it is only a matter of time until mobile VoIP becomes the dominant platform that connects the world.

I am extremely proud to be a part of driving this development and growth. And I look forward to the day, in the not-so-distant future, when we are all connected no matter where we are.

### **About the author**

Tanveer Sharif is the CEO at Vopium. He previously was managing director of Øresund Venture Cup and a member of the Regional Council of Copenhagen. Follow Tanveer on Twitter at @tanveer\_sharif.

### **About the company**

Vopium means mobile phone calls without borders. It enables customers to make affordable international mobile phone calls to family, friends and business partners anywhere, anytime. The downloadable phone app takes advantage of both VoIP and GSM technologies to enable global calling that feels, sounds and costs like a local phone call. Vopium works on over 900 different mobile phone models - from the latest smartphone to traditional mobile phones.

With over one million users in 46 countries, Vopium powers reliable, cost effective mobile communications around the world. Vopium is listed on the NYSE Euronext Paris Exchange. For more information, please visit <http://www.vopium.com>.