

Report about alternative free phone line providers (from a customer).

I write about my choice of VoIP so that maybe it might be another alternative to share with others. Vince.

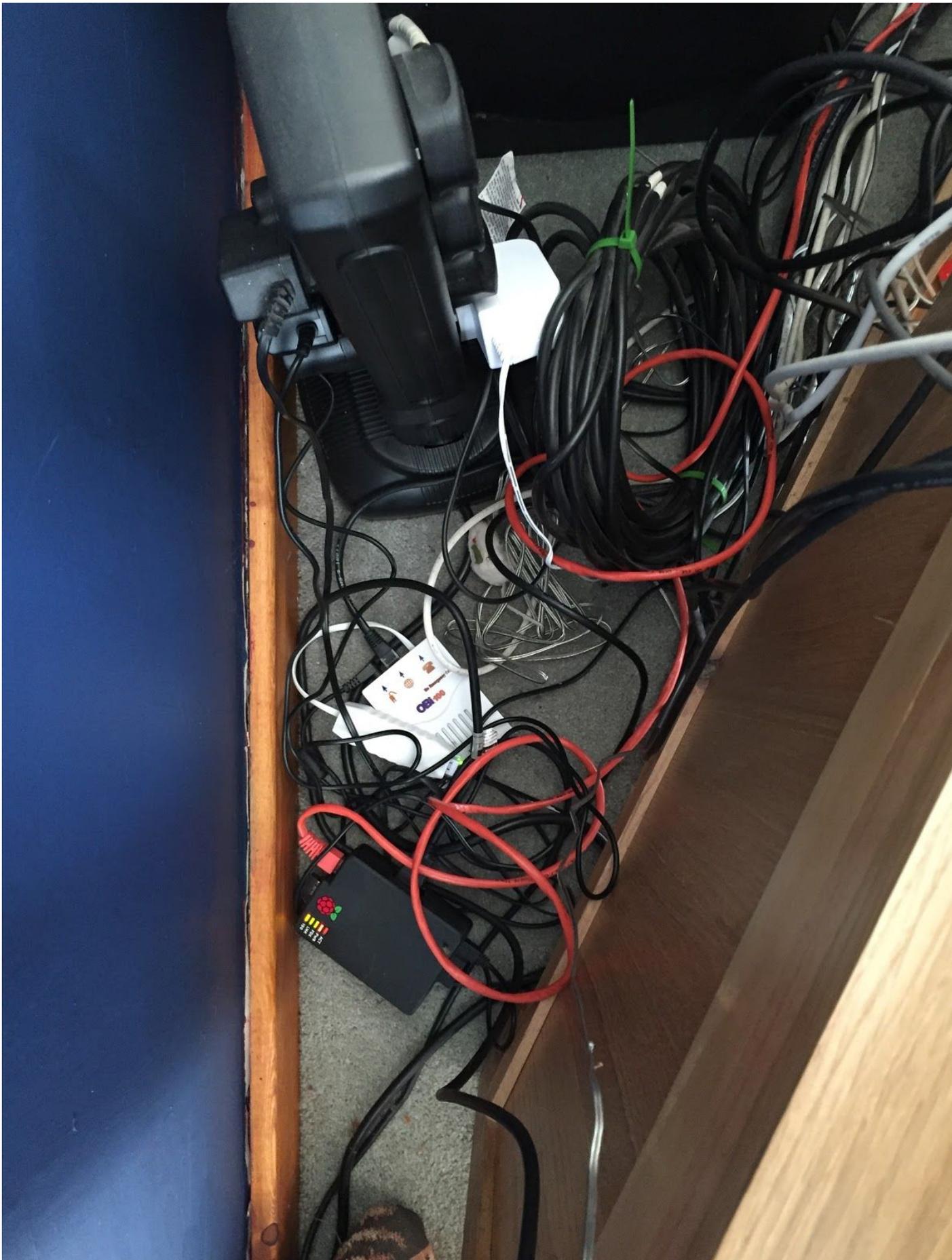
Many years ago, when I was on BT Broadband I bought a Draytel router. I work from home a lot, and have a lot of telephone conference calls. When I used the landline at home, then it was tied up and no other calls could be received. The conference call numbers were free calls so I paid nothing to call in from the landline. So the Draytel router supported VoIP with the inclusion of two FXS ports whereby you can plug in a normal telephone handset, set up some details on the router with a VoIP service and have a VoIP telephone service. Because it connected off the router, only the router needed to be powered up and the ADSL connection was live to be able to make and receive calls using the VoIP.

I used Draytel.org as the VoIP provider, the Draytek router came with a free pack to set up and get some calls. I have had this now for over 10 years and have used the VoIP service from Draytel on a Pay As You Go (PAYG) basis. I got a 0870 number and after a top up of £10 a 01524 number and voicemail service. I have topped it up once a couple of times in that period, as I used it for work conference calls, which were free even on Draytel. The important thing for voice calls using VoIP is the upstream speed as voice conversations are usually two way, with ADSL the upstream speed was very limited. As the time went by, and we know the history of ADSL provision, the bandwidth got worse, less reliable especially the upstream which made the VoIP less usable.

So when B4RN arrived, I completely dropped my landline, I was not concerned with keeping our land line telephone number as 80% of the calls received were inappropriate even though we had always been ex-directory. So we switched completely to Draytel for our telephone voice services. Though we used the landline much less as we have plenty of minutes of talk time on our mobile phones, the PAYG approach for VoIP with Draytel was very appropriate for us.

Though the Genexis router that B4RN provides has FXS ports on it, they are not activated. Instead I purchased a small device called an OBi100-UK from Obihai Technology (https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B005FSTM0G/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o04_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1 from Amazon for £29 at the time though the price has increased) that plugs into the wired network, and then plug in a telephone handset. You do need a RJ45 to BT phone socket converter (see https://www.amazon.co.uk/Solwise-RJP-BTS-RJ11-Adapter-WHITE/dp/B000Q4X9PS/ref=pd_bxgy_23_2?ie=UTF8&refRID=1NK84J6BBS5S6XW2DCW9) but I already had two. The OBi100 plugs onto the wired network - mine went straight into one of the ports on the B4RN router. I plugged my DECT cordless base station into the RJ45 to BT socket converter. I did some small set up to make on the OBi100 device which has a simple web interface with my Draytel details (Proxy server, Outbound Proxy, Registrar server; SIP details of my Draytel username and password). There were a lot of settings but most were left as the defaults other than the ones mentioned. Then we had cordless telephone handsets who allow us to make and receive calls using the Draytel VoIP service.

The picture shows the OBi100 box with the "mess" of other cables behind the TV. You can see the white converter for the adaptor socket to RJ45 connection, a black wired network Ethernet cable. The DECT base station plugs into this and the black Ethernet cable goes to the B4RN router. The OBi100 box is fairly small, and has a power adapter plugged into the multiway. And yes, that is a Raspberry Pi next to it. That is maybe another story.



So how much do I pay for my Draytel VoIP? Very little, it is PAYG and we do not use it very much to make calls. We generally use our mobile phones. We do get calls but (strangely) we do not get any of those inappropriate calls. Any voicemails are taken and sent by email with sound files as an attachment.

Like most VoIP suppliers Draytel has very good international rates (see <http://www.draytel.org/tariffs> for details) and is a standard VoIP with SIP and so if you want to call another VoIP user and have their SIP address you can actually talk for

zero cost wherever they are. This is because when having a conversation SIP to SIP it only goes across the internet and does not pass onto telephone systems at all.

My original need to go with VoIP was to join conference calls for work. I could use one of the cordless phones which is connected as described above. However, it is less convenient than using a soft phone app called Zoiper (see <http://www.zoiper.com>) which allows me to use my work laptop as a telephone. I have a headset plugged into the work laptop. I use the Zoiper app to make calls to the work conference call systems. Again it costs nothing. The Zoiper app is available for Windows, Mac OSX, Linux as well as Android and iOS, so you could install it on tablets as well as computers. I use the free version of the Zoiper app. Again it was a straightforward set up with my Draytel details. These details are, for Draytel: Domain, Username, Password and Outbound proxy and port number which are all defined by Draytel. At work, we are also using Skype for Business more and more, and so using the same work laptop and headset is more convenient than using multiple devices for different types of calls.

You could, of course, if you were happy to do without a telephone handset just sign up with Draytel (or other VoIP providers) and use Zoiper (or other softphone apps) on your computers, tablets for next to nothing.

The bandwidth provided by B4RN is brilliant for VoIP due to the fact that the upstream speed is the same as the downstream. With the removal of my landline then over half the cost of my B4RN subscription has been covered by the lack of any line rental.

So if anyone is interested in joining Draytel (there are other VoIP providers), then Draytel currently have a referral scheme (see <http://www.draytel.org/referafriend>) whereby both you as the new subscriber and I get a £2 bonus once you have signed up and paid an initial £10. Therefore please get in touch with me for my Draytel details at vinceasmith@gmail.com I hope that this explanation helps anyone on the B4RN network to get even more connected. You have nothing to lose except your landline rental fee (which always ends up with BT Openreach) and your current telephone number.

Vince Smith