

Google expands availability of its free voice mail

October 27 2009, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer



(AP) -- Google Inc. wants to answer your mobile phone calls when you can't or just don't want to talk.

In its latest bid to become a bigger player in telecommunications, the Internet search leader is giving people a chance to send calls to their cell phones into a free [voice mail](#) service unveiled earlier this year. The new choice is being introduced Tuesday.

The voice mail feature is part of [Google Voice](#), a fledgling service striving to become a hub for phone calls to people's mobile, home and office numbers.

Taking advantage of all of its tools requires getting a new number from Google Voice, a leap that many people aren't ready to make.

So Google has come up with a way to tie existing [mobile phone](#) numbers to its voice mail service. The process requires a few steps outlined at <http://www.google.com/voice>.

"We see this as a perfect step for getting familiar with Google Voice without a lot of change," said Vincent Paquet, a senior product manager.

The caveat: People choosing to stick with their existing phone numbers won't be able to take advantage of all Google Voice features, such as directing calls to a home or office number.

But the voice mail option will provide more bells and whistles than what most major mobile phone carriers offer in their standard packages.

Among other things, Google's voice mail service automatically transcribes messages and lets users customize greetings for frequent callers.

As part of its expansion efforts, [Google](#) developed a voice application for the [iPhone](#) that didn't get approved by Apple Inc. The snub triggered a [Federal Communications Commission](#) inquiry into whether Apple and the iPhone's U.S. carrier, AT&T Inc., might have been trying to stifle a potential competitor.

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