

How to escape the ever-increasing cost of copper-wire phone service.



“The PSTN is headed toward an inevitable sunset.”

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) said this back in August 2019 in describing the original Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), also known as analog copper-wire phone lines or plain old telephone service (POTS).

It’s no secret that POTS is reaching retirement age after a very long run that started on March 10, 1876, when Alexander Graham Bell famously barked to his assistant, “Mr. Watson — come here — I want to see you.” to his assistant.

What’s less well known is how incumbent telecommunications carriers are getting their customers – including building owners and managers – to move away from POTS. The carriers’ strategy, in three words: jack up prices.

Ooma is hearing from our customers that business POTS lines priced at less than \$100 a month only a year or two ago now cost several hundred dollars.

Here's one example, which we've heavily redacted to protect our customer's confidentiality.

ACCOUNT ACTIVITY				
INVOICE PERIOD 04.10.21 - 05.09.21		INVOICE NUMBER ACCOUNT NUMBER PAGE		
ACTIVITY FOR ACCOUNT				
MONTHLY CHARGES				
Period	Description	Quantity	Cost Per Unit	Amount
Peace of Mind Charge				
05/10/2021 - 06/09/2021	Business Line	1		Included
05/10/2021 - 06/09/2021	BL Call Forward Universal	1		Included
05/10/2021 - 06/09/2021	BL Caller ID	1		Included
05/10/2021 - 06/09/2021	BL Toll Restriction	1		Included
Total Peace of Mind Charge				\$72.26
05/10/2021 - 06/09/2021	Access Recovery Charge	1	\$3.00	\$3.00*
05/10/2021 - 06/09/2021	Additional Charges: Interstate Service Fee	1	\$4.97	\$4.97
TOTAL MONTHLY CHARGES				\$80.23
OTHER CHARGES AND CREDITS				
Date	Description	Amount		
05/09/2021	Administrative Services Fee (ASF) Charge	\$7.14		
TOTAL OTHER CHARGES AND CREDITS				\$7.14
SURCHARGES AND TAXES				
Description	Amount			
Federal Universal Service Fund Surcharge	\$3.33			
LNP Surcharge	\$0.23			
Federal Excise Tax	\$2.42			
911	\$0.40			
FL Telecom Relay Service Surcharge	\$0.10			
FL Communications Services Tax	\$6.57			
FL Municipal Communications Services Tax	\$5.13			
TOTAL SURCHARGES AND TAXES				\$18.18

This monthly bill is for a single POTS line for the period ending May 9, 2021. The total cost is \$105.55 after totaling up all of the taxes and fees.

ACCOUNT ACTIVITY				
INVOICE PERIOD 04.10.22 - 05.09.22				
ACTIVITY FOR ACCOUNT				
MONTHLY CHARGES				
Period	Description	Quantity	Cost Per Unit	Amount
Peace of Mind Charge				
05/10/2022 - 06/09/2022	Business Line	1		Included
05/10/2022 - 06/09/2022	BL Call Forward Universal	1		Included
05/10/2022 - 06/09/2022	BL Caller ID	1		Included
05/10/2022 - 06/09/2022	BL Toll Restriction	1		Included
Total Peace of Mind Charge				\$222.26
04/10/2022 - 05/09/2022	DS0 TDM Connectivity	1	\$150.00	\$150.00
05/10/2022 - 06/09/2022	Access Recovery Charge	1	\$3.00	\$3.00*
05/10/2022 - 06/09/2022	Additional Charges: Interstate Service Fee	1	\$4.97	\$4.97
TOTAL MONTHLY CHARGES				\$380.23
OTHER CHARGES AND CREDITS				
Date	Description	Amount		
05/09/2022	Administrative Services Fee (ASF) Charge	\$20.49		
TOTAL OTHER CHARGES AND CREDITS				\$20.49
SURCHARGES AND TAXES				
Description	Amount			
Federal Universal Service Fund Surcharge	\$38.84			
LNP Surcharge	\$0.23			
Federal Excise Tax	\$11.42			
911	\$0.40			
FL Telecom Relay Service Surcharge	\$0.10			
FL Communications Services Tax	\$32.10			
FL Municipal Communications Services Tax	\$25.12			
TOTAL SURCHARGES AND TAXES				\$108.21

This is the monthly bill for the same POTS line for the period ending May 9, 2022 — just one year later. The total cost is now \$508.93. That's a 382 percent increase!

We have another customer who showed us a staggering bill of \$2,478.56 from January 2022 for just four POTS lines. **That's \$619.64 per line!**

Numerous customers tell us they're paying \$200 a month or more for POTS lines. We're also hearing that reliability is decreasing, with customers sometimes waiting days or even weeks for service to be restored when POTS lines go down.

Building managers may not always be aware of these staggering price hikes if POTS charges are buried in much bigger line items for overall telecommunications services. They may also be reluctant to pull the plug on POTS because of concerns that mission-critical devices, such as fire alarms, elevator phones, building entry systems and more, will be knocked offline.

Not to worry. There are now POTS replacements solutions on the market – such as Ooma AirDial™ (www.ooma.com/airdial) – that can be “drop-in” substitutes for copper-wire phone lines.

The right POTS replacement choice can significantly reduce ongoing costs while meeting regulatory requirements and eliminating the need to rip and replace legacy devices.

We see POTS replacement as a three-step process: audit, select and install. Let's walk through the specifics.

Audit

POTS replacement should begin with an audit to determine how many POTS lines an organization is paying for, where each line is located and which devices are supported. This is often easier said than done.

The organization's accounting or finance team should be able to provide records that list how many POTS lines are billed to the organization and the facilities where the lines are located.

An IT or telecom specialist should then visit each facility to identify the actual wiring.

This can be an eye-opener, especially for larger businesses. We've seen facilities where live POTS lines aren't connected to any devices and, on the flip side, devices that were believed to be active that aren't connected to live POTS lines.

The final task in the audit process is making a list of the lines that will be replaced, noting the phone number and device associated with each line.

For those who want help with auditing, Ooma provides a free on-site assessment and cost evaluation for POTS replacement. Go to www.ooma.com/airdial to request an assessment or **call (866) 839-5810**.

Select

Once you've identified the POTS lines that need replacement, the next step is selecting a specific solution. Among the criteria to consider:

- **One bill from one vendor.** POTS replacement solutions typically involve multiple services – including wireless data and phone service – in one box. Some solutions are incomplete, leaving it to the customer to provision the hardware with services. Others require tracking and paying monthly bills from more than one provider. The best POTS replacement solutions deliver one comprehensive bill from one vendor.
- **Regulatory compliance.** Life-safety systems are covered by regulations – such as NFPA 72 for fire alarms and ASME A17.1 for elevator phones – that have specific requirements for POTS replacement, such as making sure the device uses a private network rather than sending data over the public internet. Don't get stuck with POTS replacement devices that aren't designed to achieve regulatory compliance.
- **Remote management.** Managing POTS replacement in multiple locations can become unwieldy if building management or IT staff must physically check on each device to confirm that it's working. Look for a solution that offers remote management through a web portal to instantly check status of all devices, along with automatic notification for key personnel when a device goes offline or has a low back-up battery.
- **Flexibility.** POTS replacement devices often need to be installed in cramped spaces, such as basements or crowded equipment closets. Choose devices that can be wall-mounted or shelf-mounted and have an option for the antennas to be physically separated from the base station.
- **Reputation.** Many small and minimally funded vendors are crowding into POTS replacement. Look for a vendor with a solid track record of delivering telecommunications services over a span of years. Also, with the recent pandemic-driven supply chain disruptions, make sure the vendor has an adequate inventory to promptly fill orders.
- **Support.** The gold standard for tech support is 24/7/365, with a clear escalation path when issues can't be fixed on the first call. The best vendors are committed to this goal.

Install

Installation of POTS replacement devices needs to be carefully coordinated, especially the moment when numbers are ported from the old POTS line to the POTS replacement, to avoid downtime.

The installation work should be assigned either to telecom support staff, an outside telecom partner or the vendor's field service team. Immediately on completion, all downstream systems should be tested to confirm the new virtual POTS lines are active.

When all the work is done, building owners and managers will get two immediate benefits: They will have peace of mind knowing their facilities are no longer at risk from the end of POTS, and their monthly expenses will drop significantly.

Ooma AirDial

Save money, remain compliant and keep using critical life-safety voice and alarm systems with Ooma AirDial – the all-in-one POTS replacement solution that runs on a secure and reliable network that is trusted by more than two million users.

Installation is easy; manage your life-safety systems in a whole new way using the Remote Device Management web portal. Get automated email and text alerts should any AirDial device go offline.

Ooma, the POTS replacement expert, makes it easy for any organization to eliminate POTS line dependency by providing the hardware, software and phone service in one simple monthly service package with one monthly bill and zero rate surprises.



About Ooma

Ooma provides leading communications services and related technologies that bring unique features, ease of use, and affordability to businesses of all sizes and residential customers through a smart cloud-based SaaS platform.

Ooma is a cloud expert because we were born in the Cloud. Ooma has more than two million users and is recognized by readers of PC Magazine as the best business VoIP phone service for nine consecutive years.

We set ourselves apart from our competition by delivering personalized service and solutions tailored to your business, and we provide outstanding business value.

Request a free consultation and personalized quote today.

Contact TouchTone Communications, an Ooma Authorized Partner, at 800.900.3668 or sales@touchtone.net.