

Slash your phone bills by 70%

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By Rachel Chan

A NEW callback service promises to slash phone bills by more than 70 per cent for mobile-phone users.

The service, Hoiio, is developed by two-year-old homegrown company Teliwave.

Presently, StarHub and Sun- Page offer similar services.

While callback services are not new, Teliwave said its technology aims to rival existing services by being cheaper and more user-friendly.

Local mobile calls cost 3.8 cents per minute, while overseas calls cost between 4.5 cents and 12.2 cents per minute, depending on destination. Each SMS, regardless of destination, costs 8.8 cents.

Mobile plans by telco operators usually charge 16 cents per minute for local calls and up to \$1.95 per minute for IDD calls.

An overseas SMS can cost up to \$0.54 or more, depending on the service provider.

The software works on iPhones, BlackBerry devices and mobile phones that run on Java, Symbian and Windows Mobile operating systems.

But there are drawbacks: Users need to have an existing mobile subscription plan before they can use the callback service.

Also, phone users may incur a charge of 3.8 cents each time they make a call with the service through the Internet. This can be avoided if they initiate the call via SMS.

It also takes longer - about 15 seconds to a whole minute - for a call to be put through. Mobile calls typically take 7 seconds.

Still, for some companies, alternatives like Hoiio help them save on costs.

Mr Yau Kim Kuan, 29, a systems engineer who enjoys corporate rates, thanks to his company, said: "My company has saved more than 30 per cent on overseas calls. My own phone bill has been halved, from over \$60 to \$30."

The multinational corporation he works for has hundreds of employees in its Singapore branch, but only the 20 to 30 staff who travel frequently are on Hoiio.

Developed more than a decade ago, callback is a system that redirects mobile-phone calls in such a way as to bypass higher charges set by regular telcos.

However, due to the sheer inconvenience of the service, it was always an industry underdog.

Conventional callback methods require the caller to dial an access code - which can be anywhere from four to 10 digits - then hang up and wait for the operator to call back before entering a destination number.

Hoiio, which took Teliwave more than a year to develop, was benchmarked against award-winning telephony service Jajah, which is based in the United States.



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