



Internet Telephony Service Providers Association

Press Release

Industry unites around new VoIP trade body

London. Wednesday, 26th January

ITSPA, the Internet Telephony Services Providers' Association, elected its Council at its inaugural members' meeting on 20th January. Drawing together experts from UK-based companies large and small, ITSPA aims to ensure that consumers can benefit from VoIP services by promoting best practice – one of ITSPA's first tasks is to ensure consumers' rights are protected through the drafting of a code of practice, to which all of ITSPA's members must adhere.

ITSPA has been created to help ensure the UK can lead the way in VoIP, both in terms of the regulatory environment, consumer protection, services, and also commercial and technical infrastructure. The UK is currently lagging behind in New Voice Services when compared with Japan, the USA, as well as other countries in the EU, notably France. ITSPA is committed to ensure this gap is bridged and the UK becomes a leading country in innovative communications services. Eli Katz, ITSPA Council Member (Xconnect), said, "this is a tough challenge, but through our organized, collective efforts, ITSPA is confident we can help the UK become the global market leader in VoIP".

Comments from ITSPA Council Members:

Kim Thesiger, Gossiptel: "There was a clear recognition within the industry that VoIP players did not yet have a united voice in discussions with UK and EU regulators and legislators and that more needed to be done to protect consumers from some of the cowboy operators out there. ITSPA provides a democratic, universal platform that can proactively address these issues."

Eli Katz, Xconnect: "Traditional telecoms companies need to wake up to the benefits and advantages of Voice over IP products and services for consumers. ITSPA's members have already risen to the challenge and are committed to delivering first-class, competitive services to consumers across the UK and Europe".

Camille de Stempel, AOL Director of Policy: "Internet telephony could bring significant benefit to consumers in terms of new services, easier communications and potential cost savings. It is important that as an industry we ensure these advances are delivered to consumers as quickly and simply as possible, and ITSPA will play a key part in this process."

Claire Robinson, Centrica: "VoIP will bring cost savings to consumers and will allow them to customise their communications to their specific needs. ITSPA is committed to working together to maximise these benefits for the consumer and to ensure they have the best possible VoIP experience".

Linus Surguy, Technical Director, Magrathea Telecom: "VoIP is a new technology that will change the way we communicate and it is important that there is a trade body, such as ITSPA, to protect the needs of the industry and consumers alike".

Allan Howes, CEO, Bon.net: "Internet Telephony is much more than just voice communications. Indeed, it will deliver a whole new generation of services including multi-media, "presence" functions (as with Instant Messaging Services), roaming abilities, fixed/mobile convergence, personalized inbound services as well as CD quality calls. ITSPA will work with all representatives of the telecoms industry and regulatory bodies to help ensure that this industry thrives."

The ITSPA Council

ITSPA's elected interim Council members, who will serve a six-month term, are as follows:

Camille de Stempel – AOL
Allan Howes – Bon.net
Claire Robinson – Centrica
Kim Thesiger – Gossiptel
Peter Gradwell – Gradwell.com
Sue Davidson - Inclarity
Linus Surguy – Magrathea Telecommunications
Eli Katz – T-Strategy
Alex Waterman – Vodaf

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About VoIP

Internet Telephony is the ability to make voice calls over any Internet connection, particularly broadband, using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Internet Telephony Service Providers can provide regular and enhanced phone line services – at reduced cost – with calls to other Internet phones often free of charge.

ITSPA exists to:

- Encourage the innovation and development of the VoIP industry through the promotion of self-regulation and competition;
- Lobby Ofcom, the UK Government and the European institutions to ensure the UK and Europe remain the most favourable environment in which to run a VoIP business and in which to be a VoIP customer;
- Respond to UK Government and European regulators on behalf of its members;
- Investigate solutions for industry, including fraud black lists, peering and interoperability;
- Reassure Consumers that any product or service bought from a company displaying the ITSPA logo comes with a high standard of consumer protection, which is properly policed and includes a dispute resolution procedure.

ITSPA believes in:

- The benefits of self-regulation to promote the growing VoIP sector;
- The need to foster a truly competitive and innovative market where VoIP providers can compete with existing telecoms providers on a level playing field;
- The use of geographic numbers for VoIP providers;
- All ITSPs should provide "best efforts" access to emergency services and provide accurate information to the consumer about the level of access to emergency services available to them.
- Open, non-discriminatory access through all Broadband ISPs (i.e. ISPs should not block/hinder customers from using third party VoIP providers);
- The facilitation of the provision of "naked DSL" (i.e. the provision of broadband access without needing to also pay for telephone line rental);
- Effective and competitively priced Local Loop Unbundling;
- Efficient and competitively priced number portability (i.e. the ability to transfer/retain your phone number when you change service provider).

The ITSPA Secretariat can be contacted via email at secretariat@itpsa.org.uk or by making a free SIP call to sip:111@itpsa.org.uk