

Shopping & Dining Guide For the Hopeless Romantic

Valentine's Day Tip: Spread the love with Internet phone service

By T.L. Simon

Long distance relationships are difficult enough, but being apart on Valentine's Day is an extra challenge. Internet phone service however is making it far easier than it used to be.

Whether you're pen pals, attend separate colleges or just not near your sweetheart, communicating with your significant other on this most romantic of days needn't be difficult or expensive.

Greg and his girlfriend Suzanne live three provinces apart in different cities, yet they pay no long distance phone bills for all their lovey-dovey, late-night chatting. That's because Suzanne's number has the same area code as Greg's, so the call is considered local. And when Greg leaves a voice message for Suzanne, it's automatically e-mailed to her inbox at work, where she listens to it on her computer.

Couples like Greg and Suzanne are tapping into the

latest trend in phone service that is changing the way Canadians make and receive phone calls. It's called Internet phone service, or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and it allows anyone with a high-speed Internet connection to make phone calls using their existing touch-tone phones.

"Voice quality and reliability using VoIP is as good as traditional phone companies," says Joe Parent at Vonage Canada. "By making calls over the Internet, people avoid hefty long distance fees and receive a raft of additional phone features - like voicemail, call waiting, caller ID and others - at no additional charge."

Internet phone service is a breath of fresh air for Vancouver resident Michael, since his long-distance love Sonia lives 2,500 miles away in Mexico.

"Before they signed up with Vonage Canada, Michael was coughing up large sums of money for numerous calling cards," Parent explained. "By setting up Sonia with a phone number with a local 604 area code, Michael can now pick up the phone when ever he wants and call his sweetheart as if it were a local call. More information is available online at www.vonage.ca."

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