

FreedomPop to Sell Phones, Offer Free Data, Voice and Messaging

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FreedomPop is a data-only MVNO that, up to this point, has pushed its freemium service model on hotspots, routers, dongles and connected cases. But that changes soon as the company is getting ready to offer an IP-based voice and messaging service along with data on actual Android phones.

“It’s something we’ve been working on since inception,” said CEO Stephen Stokols adding that FreedomPop has serviced a niche up to this point but now that he feels the model is proven, he’s ready to go full service.

The free tier provide 500 MB of data, unlimited messaging and 200 anytime minutes—with free calls between FreedomPop customers. The service and phones are expected to go on sale later this summer. Stokols said he hopes to launch with three Android devices in price ranges of \$99, \$149 and \$199. The specific devices haven’t been set yet, but Stokols said the Samsung Galaxy S2 and the HTC EVO are both in the running. Plus, any phones compatible with Sprint’s EV-DO and Clearwire’s WiMax can run on FreedomPop’s network.

FreedomPop has put together its own Android version that will feature slight modifications. But most importantly, it will enable voice and messaging through Android’s native dialer and messaging app with no need for an Over-the-Top application. Customers bringing their own devices to FreedomPop will just need to install app.

“One key enabler here is that it’s a data-only phone. It’s the first ever in the U.S. data-only phone,” said Stokols, explaining that everything is VoIP over 3G and 4G. As a bonus, Stokols said the data-only phones experience better call quality and improved battery life.

Similar to FreedomPop’s existing plans, customers on the full-service plan will be able to add 2 GB for around \$18 per month. Stokols said adding minutes will set back customers \$6 for 500 minutes or around \$10 for unlimited talk. He added that the channels for earning more data will be open to customers on these new plans, too, and that something similar for earning additional voice minutes is in the works.

For now, FreedomPop phones will only run on EV-DO and WiMax networks but LTE will become available to FreedomPop customers as Sprint continues its nationwide

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