

Working from Home with VanillaSoft

The inside sales industry has been an early adopter of the work-from-home model, and salespeople can effectively use VanillaSoft from wherever they are located. Along with the advantages of working from home, the wide variety of equipment and Internet connections also present challenges. This guide helps you prepare for using VanillaSoft with our VoIP service. We will cover recommendations for your Internet connection, as well as system requirements and suggestions.

Computer System Recommendations

VanillaSoft highly recommends having a separate system for work that is not used for general Internet surfing, social media, downloading, gaming, etc. Keeping your work system free from excess software and potential sources of malware can greatly reduce problems that will affect your ability to work productively. In our experience, systems that are used for both work and home will encounter significantly more problems with virus infections and malware, which cannot be resolved by VanillaSoft support.

System Requirements

If you work from home you must run Windows Vista or newer (Windows 7 or 8 recommended), with at least 4GB of RAM and a dual-core processor (Intel Core2Duo or higher, AMD Athlon II or higher). Mac's must run OSX 10.8 or higher to work properly with our VoIP lines.

Purchasing a Computer for Your Job?

We recommend the following if purchasing a computer for your job:

- Intel Core i3 processor or better
- 4GB of RAM or better (8GB highly recommended)
- At least 256GB of hard-drive space
- Windows 8.1, if possible
- A business-class system. Business-class systems are generally built with higher quality components and come with less extraneous software, which can slow your machine down or cause other problems. Many of the major OEM manufacturers have business lines, including Dell, Lenovo, HP, and others.

System Security

Make sure that your PC or Mac system is up to date with the latest updates by turning on the automatic update feature. These updates help keep your system safe from the latest online threats, and can help prevent problems from occurring.

Ensure that you have an up-to-date antivirus program on your system that is currently free from viruses/malware. Although VanillaSoft cannot recommend or endorse software to scan your system for malware, common tools to use include:

- Malwarebytes
- Anti-Malware - <https://www.malwarebytes.org/>
- SUPERAntiSpyware - <http://www.superantispyware.com/>
- Microsoft's own Malicious Software Removal tool - <http://www.microsoft.com/security/pc-security/malware-removal.aspx>

Please make sure to read and understand each company's terms and conditions, and if you are uncomfortable running scans on your system, please take it to a professional. VanillaSoft is not affiliated with and cannot provide support for these companies' products. If your system is already infected, the virus/malware may mask itself from security utilities, or corrupt them so they no longer work correctly. In these cases, you will need to have it professionally serviced.

VanillaSoft recommends you pay for antivirus solutions, as these tend to be more effective. Clients have had success with Eset Security Nod32 and Kaspersky antivirus programs. Whatever program you decide to use, we recommend getting just the antivirus. The system security suites often include additional software which does not provide better protection, but tend to cause conflicts/issues with a lot of software.

How Can I Tell if My System is Already Infected?

The presence of a virus or malware on your system can manifest itself in many ways. If you notice that your browser crashes or freezes at random, or you are getting a lot of popups/ads, that can indicate an infection. If your homepage or search engine keeps getting changed to something you did not set, or if you start noticing bookmarks that you didn't create, that is also an indication.

Headset Recommendations

VanillaSoft recommends a USB headset from a quality manufacturer. Companies such as Logitech, Microsoft, Plantronics and others produce excellent headsets in the \$40-\$50 dollar range. We do not advise purchasing cheaper headsets, as they tend to have very poor microphone quality, which can lead to communication difficulties with prospective clients. Many of our clients advise their home callers to buy the Microsoft LifeChat LX-3000 or Logitech USB Headset H340 headsets as a base minimum for a quality unit. We highly advise against wireless headsets, as they can tend to desync/lose connections.

Internet Connection Recommendations

For our ConnectMeVoice VoIP lines to work correctly, you should make sure your Internet connection meets these standards.

Internet connection speed from your provider:

A connection speed of 5 MB download and 2MB upload is baseline. You can test your speeds at www.speedtest.net. Please check both at the closest local server and select a server much further away. The VoIP connection may work at lower speeds, but we cannot guarantee quality of service. Fiber or cable connections are the preferred Internet connection type, but DSL connections should work as well. Wireless connection types will likely experience degraded or nonexistent performance, as the underlying architecture they use generally does not support true VoIP systems. VanillaSoft VoIP will not work on any cellular network based Internet connection.

Connections in your house:

Please connect your system via an Ethernet cable if at all possible. Wireless connections can often have intermittent drops or changes in speed, which can drastically affect call quality. A wired connection is reliable, and offers the best voice quality and lowest chance of dropped calls. It is preferable to use your own router. If you can supply your own router, please look at purchasing the Cisco Rv-180W, which is recommended by our partner VoIP provider, ConnectMeVoice. This is a business-class router that is known to work properly. This router is available via Amazon, Best Buy, and many other major retailers.

Your Internet provider may supply you a combined modem/router, or you may use a different router than the recommended Cisco router. In this case you may run into issues with a setting on your modem or router called "SIP ALG." This is a feature of some routers which can cause adverse effects on a true VoIP system, such as dropped calls, inability to connect, or other problems. Please contact your ISP or your router manufacturer to confirm whether or not this setting exists on your equipment, and if it does, to ensure it is disabled. For more information on SIP ALG, see the next page.

Connecting from public sources:

Although many locations offer free Wi-Fi/high speed Internet services, many of these systems are throttled or restricted and may adversely affect your ability to use the VoIP service. VanillaSoft cannot guarantee any availability of service if you are connecting on a publicly-offered Wi-Fi connection. This includes hotels, airports, coffee shops, and any other public place with Internet access.

What is SIP ALG, and how does it affect VoIP?

SIP is an open-source standard for true VoIP communication. SIP ALG is an attempt by equipment manufacturers to prioritize VoIP traffic over non-VoIP traffic. Unfortunately, there is no industry standard for how to do this. As such, each company has its own methods, and many of them tend to break VoIP rather than help it. This will cause problems with any true VoIP system, not just VanillaSoft's. You may notice that chat programs such as Skype will work properly. This is because they are not a true VoIP system, and use their own proprietary method of communicating. This results in your router not seeing it as VoIP traffic, and it thus does not interfere with it. However, this limits the call quality of Skype. It can be good, but it will never be as good as a true VoIP system.