

Google Voice and Google Wave

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What are Google Voice and Google Wave and why should I care?

These recent offerings from Internet search engine and software company Google (*google.com*) have great potential. Google Voice is a web-based, call forwarding and voicemail system with some surprising features. Google Wave combines elements of instant messaging, document collaboration and email into a useful communications tool. Both of these products are worth paying attention to, as they could fundamentally change the way we communicate with each other over the phone and the Internet.



An Introduction to Google Voice

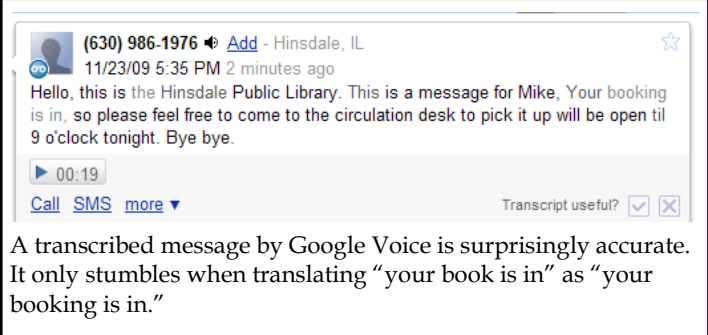
Google Voice (GV) provides a local number which automatically forwards calls to your other phones (home, cell, spouse's cell, etc.), greatly reducing the chance that you miss calls. If all of your phones go unanswered, your call is routed to Google voicemail.

In addition, you have the option of having a computerized auto attendant to prompt your caller for his or her name. This gives you the chance to screen your calls and send unwanted ones to voicemail. You can even specify that certain incoming phone numbers always go directly to voicemail without intervention.

Once a caller leaves a voicemail, you are automatically notified of the new message via email or text. In fact, GV will actually transcribe

the message and include its text in your notification, but if you'd like to listen to the original, you can do so.

If you give your Google Voice number to your friends and family as your main number, they won't have any difficulty reaching you, regardless of whether you change your cell or home number.



The screenshot shows a text message from a contact named "(630) 986-1976" located in Hinsdale, IL. The message is dated 11/23/09 at 5:35 PM, 2 minutes ago. The text of the message reads: "Hello, this is the Hinsdale Public Library. This is a message for Mike, Your booking is in, so please feel free to come to the circulation desk to pick it up will be open til 9 o'clock tonight. Bye bye." Below the text is a play button icon and a duration of "00:19". At the bottom of the message box are links for "Call", "SMS", and "more", along with a "Transcript useful?" checkbox that is checked.

A transcribed message by Google Voice is surprisingly accurate. It only stumbles when translating "your book is in" as "your booking is in."

How much does Google Voice cost?

Currently, Google does not charge for any of the features detailed here. This may change when they makes the product more widely available, but for now, it's a steal.

How do I sign up for Google Voice?

Google Voice is currently available by invitation only. You can get on the waiting list here: <https://services.google.com/fb/forms/googlevoiceinvite/>. Alternatively, if someone you know is using Google Voice, they may be able to send you an invitation directly.

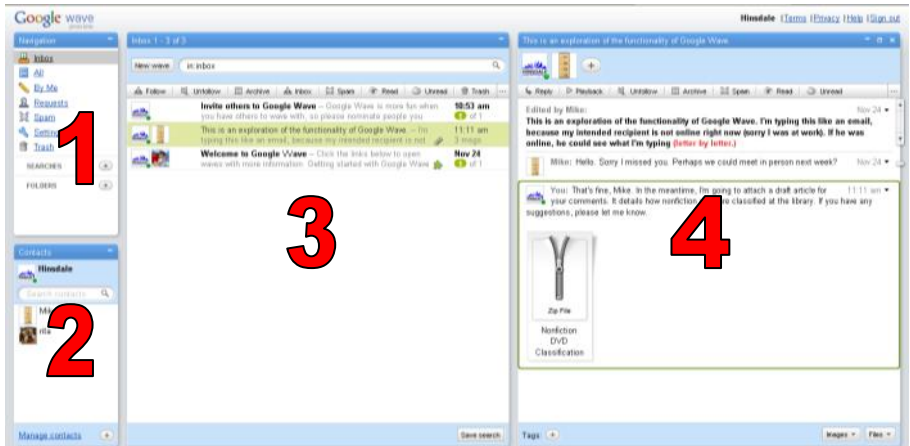
Is there anything else I should know about Google Voice?

Google recently acquired Gizmo5, a computer-based Internet telephony company similar to Skype (*skype.com*). This strategic purchase should allow Google Voice to enhance its already robust offerings and become more of a competitor to traditional telephone companies like AT&T.

An Introduction to Google Wave

Google Wave (GW) is a difficult product to grasp at first. It has some navigational elements like a web-based email account and has contacts which look like an instant messaging buddy list. The main area of the interface is devoted to a collaborative workspace similar to a Google Docs word processing file. Each individual element of the interface is relatively familiar, but their juxtaposition feels unexpected.

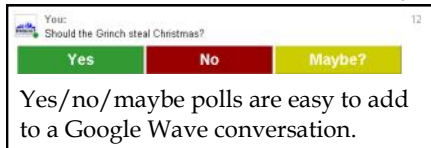
Google Wave uses a conversation-as-document idea, in which people write and edit text in a shared text area in real time.



Google Wave's Interface (please refer to numbers on diagram)

- 1) The navigation section allows you to open your inbox, delete messages (waves) and identify spam messages.
- 2) The contacts area shows your buddies along with their avatar (identifying icon). If you have a long list of wave contacts, you can use the search box to retrieve the correct one.
- 3) The inbox is much like the inbox for an email account. It shows the messages available for you to read and edit.
- 4) The main editing area appears when you select a wave from your inbox. The people involved in the discussion are listed directly below the title bar by icon. You can add your comments at the end of the message by typing a new wavelet (kind of like a new paragraph or section,) or you can edit text that is already there.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Google Wave is that everyone communicates via a single document rather than trying to wade through a morass of replied and forwarded email messages. In addition, it is particularly well suited for live collaboration, as participants can see each other typing letter-by-letter on the shared document in real time. It's easy to recreate the sequence of an edited document through a playback feature. This can be helpful for newly invited participants. You can also include cool add-ons like yes/no/maybe polls, to aid in your decision making.



Conclusion

If you can get someone to extend an invitation to Google Voice or Google Wave, you should take advantage of the opportunity. Each of these tools has the potential to change the way we communicate.

Additional Resources

Google Voice

- Request an invitation here:
<https://services.google.com/fb/forms/googlevoiceinvite/>
- Five Brilliant Ways to Use Google Voice:
<http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/chris-dannen/techwatch/six-brilliant-ways-use-google-voice>

Google Wave

- Request an invitation here:
<https://services.google.com/fb/forms/wavesignup/>
- The Top Five Game-Changing Features of Google Wave:
mashable.com/2009/05/31/google-wave-features/
- How to Use Google Wave:
www.ehow.com/how_5473674_use-google-wave.html
- Google Wave – A Complete Guide:
mashable.com/2009/05/28/google-wave-guide/

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Mike Oetting, Reference Librarian
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20 East Maple St.
Hinsdale IL 60521
630-986-1976
www.hinsdalelibrary.info
reference@hinsdalelibrary.info