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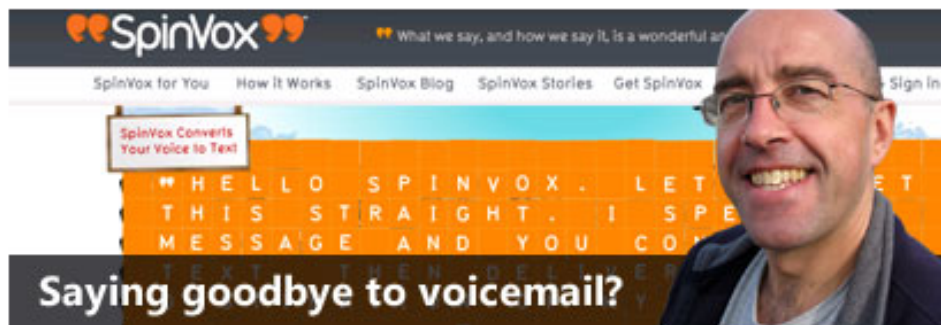
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Thursday, 23 October 2008

## The Clymo Brief: Testing SpinVox



**You can run from the phone, but you can't hide. These days, no matter where you go, you're never far from a call.**

So when SpinVox offered me a trial of a service which sends voicemails to your mobile as text messages, I thought I'd give it a go. While I didn't doubt the system would work, I did have reservations.

The biggest one centred on what would happen if someone waffled while they left a voicemail? Would this produce a torrent of disjointed text messages?

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The core of SpinVox is built on the foundations of a system called D2 or "The Brain" as the blurb likes to call it. This, it seems, revolves around a heady cocktail of artificial intelligence, voice recognition and natural linguistics. In short, it's able to understand the way we talk and process what we say into raw text.



That means the system can be applied to other ways we communicate today, everything from making memos on-the-go through to adding instant updates to a Blog.

#### What does it cost?

The SpinVox website currently has a free seven day trial available, after which a trio of different packages are offered. The Spin10 package costs £3.00 and will deal with ten voicemail to text conversions. The top end of the three packages, the Spin50 deal, allows 50 voicemail to text conversions at a cost of £9.99 (20p per message).


There's also a suite of features alongside the voicemail options, including Memo, Blog, Blast and Social - though a couple of other services are billed as 'coming soon'.

One thing to note though is that it doesn't work with pay-as-you-go phones because of call divert restrictions by some operators.

SpinVox allows a good degree of personalisation. For starters, you can customise your voicemail greeting, but it's also possible to tweak the way messages are sent to you, by SMS, e-mail or both.



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### How does it work?

To get started, I was first asked to enter a supplied code into my mobile and call it until the confirmation message appeared on my screen. I then had to call my mobile, which I did using my office phone, and left a test message for myself.

Shortly after, I got what I'd said on the landline as a text message on my mobile. It works quite well because whatever has been spoken is encapsulated within speech marks. There's also a "QuickLink" included that allows you to call your voicemail and hear the spoken version of the exact same message.



However, if your screen contains a (?) then it means SpinVox has been unable to decipher a voicemail word. Similarly, a straight line on your mobile screen will indicate if there are gaps caused by a network signal drop out.

And finally, to answer my initial doubt about this service, a ..." tells you if a voicemail message has been too long. Nevertheless, SpinVox states that voicemail messages can be up to three standard text messages long, which should cover the bulk of your incoming calls. If not, I guess you could always record a personal greeting that tells callers not to waffle and to keep it brief!

### So is it any good?

Initially this is one of those things that you might feel a little underwhelmed about. However, once you've seen it in action, it's easy to be addicted. It was a similar experience [when I tried out the voice recognition software package, Dragon Naturally Speaking.](#)

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Having been pretty cynical about that concept, the latest version convinced me that speech recognition really does have exciting potential. Having given the SpinVox service a workout, this also seems a decent product.



### Additional appeal

Anything that removes the need for me to go through tedious menu systems in order to check voicemail has got to be good news. This week was perhaps the last time I'll ever have to listen to that annoying robotic voice ever again. There are other features here that make SpinVox additionally appealing.

The memo option is perfect for saving off-the-cuff comments and out-of-the-box ideas that you tend to get as you're bowling along during the daily grind, commuting to and from work or getting ready for bed.

And there's no doubt that the Blogging feature of this system will prove a real boon for some. In the space of just a few steps it's possible to enable the system so that each time you wish to post a Blog update you simply speak your mind and the SpinVox service will automatically post your latest musings onto the web as text. Fab!

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