

Asterisk and Video phones

In the 1960's ATT tried to launch a videophone service that was not very successful due to the limited technology of the time. They had been working on the project for decades and in mid-1964, the product was demonstrated at the New York World's Fair.

<http://paleofuture.gizmodo.com/a-brief-history-of-the-videophone-that-almost-was-1214969187>

Now with Asterisk and the current technology, it is trivially easy to implement two way video calls.

You can find several different phones that have built in cameras and displays. The Zoiper app for pc's will support video if you get the paid Zoiper 3 Biz version and have a camera on your computer.

What makes it all possible is the **codec** (coder-decoder) that the video phones use.

The Nortel IP Phone 1535, which is available from many vendors on eBay for about \$40, supports the h263 and h264 codecs.

The Zoiper app supports h264, h263p which is incompatible with the plain h263, and another codec called vp8.

To enable video calling in Asterisk just means adding a couple of lines to the sip.conf configuration for the phones.



Nortel IP Phone 1535

This is the sip.conf for one of the Nortel phones:

```
[6215]
type=friend
context=default
secret=mysecret
host=dynamic
qualify=yes
dtmfmode=rfc2833
defaultuser=6215
defaultip=
disallow=all
allow=ulaw
allow=h263
allow=h264
videosupport=yes
progressinband=no
mailbox = 6215
```

Note the **allow=h263**, **allow=h264**, and **videosupport=yes** in the file. This is all that is needed to enable a phone with built in video support to place calls through Asterisk and display the video on both ends of the call.

The way this particular phone works is you press the button with the camera on it, dial the extension number of the other video phone, they press the camera button to allow a video call and the video displays on the screens.

If they just lift the handset, an audio only call will be enabled and no video will display.

The phone also has several settings for how the video is displayed. You can choose to display both remote and local as small images, remote as a big image and local as a small image, and remote as a big image only.

Common Codec

As long as the video phones can negotiate a common codec between them, they will display video.

This means that the phones on either end must have at least one codec that both of them support.

In the case of the test system above, both the Nortel IP Phones and the Zoiper app share the h264 as a common codec so they can communicate with each other in the video mode.