

I team teach a VoIP class with another instructor. We have each student set up a virtual Linux machine using VMWare Workstation and Debian Linux. Then we have them install Asterisk, the open source pbx software from <http://www.digium.com>.

Because VMWare workstation does not support physical hardware like a T1 or Analog card, I also have one machine running Debian Linux and Asterisk at the “bare metal” level.

This machine has one Digium TDM400 analog card with two FXS and two FXO daughter boards. It also has a Digium TDM110 T1 card which is connected to an Adit 600 channel bank with three eight port FXS cards. This is used to demonstrate how Asterisk can support legacy telephone hardware to provide dial tone for 24 analog telephone sets.

I have a number of traditional 2500 DTMF (touchtone®) sets as well as a legacy rotary dial type 500 set. This demonstrates how Asterisk can support just about any type of telephone set from your grandmother’s old candlestick phone to the latest digital SIP protocol set with the right hardware.

Channel banks such as these are often available on eBay for pennies on the original dollar. I paid a whopping \$18.95 plus \$12.00 shipping for the one we use in class.

Asterisk compatible cards are also often found on eBay at reasonable prices.