

Mobile video calls the next frontier, says Skype head

June 15 2010, by Martin Abbugao



A Skype promoter walks with a sign at the CommunicAsia 2010 conference and exhibition show in Singapore. Making video calls from a mobile phone to TV sets or computers will be the next frontier for information technology, the head of Internet telephony pioneer Skype said Tuesday.

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Chief executive Josh Silverman told a technology conference in Singapore that communication was moving from a "hardware-based"

industry to one driven by software allowing people to keep in touch using a wider range of devices.

"What's the next frontier? I believe it's about ubiquity," Silverman told delegates to the CommunicAsia 2010 technology conference and trade exhibition in Singapore.

"It's about allowing you to communicate whenever, wherever and however you like. At Skype, we envision a world where communication flows like water.

"The basic idea is that any computing device becomes a communications device with the addition of our software and you can communicate however and wherever you want."

Skype's free Internet video and audio calls using desktop and laptop computers have connected millions of people worldwide, from business executives to migrant labourers.

Skype offers more sophisticated services to users for a fee, allowing it to generate revenues of 716 million dollars last year, up 30 percent over the previous year.

Currently, mobile video calls using the system can only be made using certain [handsets](#) such as Nokia's N900 [smartphone](#) and Apple's iPhone, but the company said it plans to introduce more platforms.

By next year, eight of the 10 leading personal computer manufacturers in the world will have their products pre-loaded with Skype software before they are shipped, Silverman said.

The firm has also forged partnerships with some of the world's leading electronics makers to put its software on their products, allowing people

to make or receive video calls on a high-definition TV in the comfort of their living room, according to Silverman.

"The future of communications is an emotional one -- technology that helps bring families together, seal business deals, lends a voice and video to remote villages," he said.

"Innovation and technology is only worthwhile if it improves the human condition."

Skype's booth at CommunicAsia was among the most popular for visitors, who were allowed to make free video calls.

Chatpawee Trichachawanwong, 24, who hosts a Thai television programme on technology and calls herself a heavy Skype user, said she enjoyed having the free airtime offer at the booth.

She made two calls from an [iPhone](#), each lasting roughly a minute, one to her family in Thailand and the other to a friend.

"I found it very impressive and best of all it's free. They didn't know I was calling from Skype because it was very clear," she told AFP.

Dan Neary, Skype's vice president for the Asia Pacific, said 46 percent of mobile broadband users are based in the region and this was likely to grow further.

"So clearly, Asia Pacific will be a growth engine for mobile over the next couple of years," he said.

While video calling technology has been in the market for sometime, "what made Skype successful is that we've made it simple and easy" and with little or no cost, said Silverman.

A Filipino professional at the show said he talked to his brother in Abu Dhabi via Skype video call using his laptop for one and a half hours without cost this month.

He said a similar call cost him about 90 Singapore dollars (64 US) on a landline in April before he registered with Skype.

[Skype](#) last year accounted for 12 percent of the world's international calling minutes, up from eight percent in 2008.

"The best is yet to come," Silverman promised.

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