

Under Microsoft, Skype aims for one billion users

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Skype CEO Tony Bates speaks during a news conference in 2011. Microsoft's Skype Internet telephone service hopes to quadruple the number of users to get to one billion, division president Tony Bates said Thursday.

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Bates, who heads the unit that was acquired by Microsoft last year but operates autonomously, said growth will come from mobile users and from partnerships like the one [Skype](#) has with Facebook.

Bates told the All Things Digital conference in California that he hopes to "accelerate" progress toward his business goal of expanding Skype.

"If we can get to a billion (users), I'd be very happy," he said.

He cited Facebook as a key to growth for Skype, which now has 250 million users.

"They're the partner of choice," he said, offering the possibility "for us to become the de facto standard for voice and [video communication](#)."

The Skype feature on [Facebook](#) allows for multiperson conversations and a camera icon that can be clicked on for instant one-on-one video calls with friends.

Bates maintained that because of explosive growth in the use of smartphones, "the top priority is definitely mobile," including competing platforms from firms such as Google's Android and Apple's iOS.

He said Skype is moving to expand its presence on various [mobile platforms](#), with apps that allow smartphone users more calling options by using the Internet.

"The dream for Skype is to be on every major platform that has momentum," he said.

"Today in terms of downloads it's the [iPhone](#), but Android has the fastest growing momentum."

He said Skype can use the reach of Microsoft, the world's biggest software firm, to expand its presence, but without limiting itself to the Windows platform.

Skype users can make low-cost or free phone calls over the Internet using their computers or smartphones. Skype bypasses the standard telephone network by channeling voice and video calls over the Web.

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