

Skype jacks ads into free Internet phone calls

June 14 2012



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"We're excited to introduce Conversation Ads as an opportunity for marketers to reach our hundreds of millions of connected users," Sandhya Venkatachalam said in a post at the official Skype blog.

"While on a 1:1 audio call, users will see content that could spark

additional topics of conversation that are relevant to Skype users and highlight unique and local brand experiences."

The silent conversation ads are available to marketers where ever Skype is available and will be shown during free Skype-to-Skype calls on computer's powered by Microsoft's [Windows software](#), according to Venkatachalam.

Microsoft's Skype Internet telephone service hopes to quadruple the number of users to get to one billion, division president Tony Bates said two weeks ago at a prestigious All Things Digital conference in California.

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.

He cited [Facebook](#) as a key to growth for Skype, which now has 250 million users.

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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Citation: Skype jacks ads into free Internet phone calls (2012, June 14) retrieved 16 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-skype-jacks-ads-free-internet.html>

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