

Skype Me



By Russ McGuire - russ.mcguire@gmail.com

Upfront, let me confess that I've never used Skype. I don't even have it installed, so despite the title of this article, don't bother trying to Skype me. That being said, I continue to be fascinated by the company and recognize the incredible power the application can bring in

taking the Gospel to the farthest corners of the world. Lately, the company has been in the news, so it seems like a good time to review what Skype is and how Christian ministries can use it to the glory of God.

Who is Skype?

Skype is the largest telephone company in the world. Skype, the application, is a tool for making cheap or free voice and video calls around the world.

Skype has an interesting history.

The company was launched in 2003 by the developers behind the very popular KaZaA peer-to-peer file sharing service. KaZaA faced numerous lawsuits over its enabling of people to acquire copyright protected music and video content without paying for it. The founders seemed to exhibit a lack of respect for intellectual property rights and the laws protecting them.

Skype was envisioned as a way to leverage similar peer-to-peer Internet protocols to enable people to legally make telephone calls without having to pay expensive international long distance charges to telephone companies. The service quickly became popular and reached 100 million users by 2006.

In late 2005 eBay acquired Skype for \$3.1 billion. eBay believed that buyers and sellers on eBay's site would use Skype to discuss products, increasing cus-

tommer confidence in making purchases, driving up sales prices and enabling the sale of higher dollar items. The acquisition didn't go well and in 2007, eBay took a \$1.4 billion write down on their books related to the deal.

Despite the management challenges, Skype continued to grow, and last year about a quarter of all international telephone call minutes were on Skype. Given that the synergies with their core business had never materialized, eBay sold 70% of Skype to a collection of investors for \$2 billion in November 2009. According to Wikipedia, in 2010 Skype had a billion user accounts.

On May 10 of this year, Microsoft agreed to acquire Skype for \$8.5B (which provides a nice payout to eBay for their remaining 30%). In keeping with the company's founding legacy of questionable integrity, the company let go many of their top executives in June to avoid having to share the wealth with them when the Microsoft deal finally goes through.

Bottom line – I would never represent the company as being founded on strong Christian values, nor would I consider them to be operated by Biblical principles.

But, they sure do have a cool product!

What is Skype?

Skype is an application that provides a voice and video calling service over the Internet. It roughly falls into the Voice over IP (VoIP) category, although Skype has tended not to use the most common standard VoIP protocols, instead using proprietary protocols.

The original Skype model enabled two people who each had the Skype software on their computer to call each other for free anywhere in the world.

In 2004, the company introduced SkypeOut, which allows Skype users to call from their computer to any telephone number. The pricing for SkypeOut was generally much lower than the pricing for a telephone-to-telephone international long distance call.

In 2005, SkypeIn was introduced, giving Skype users (for a fee) a telephone number that people can dial from any phone to get to them.

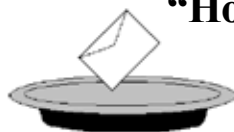
In 2006, video calling was added to the Skype client software.

Also, in 2006 the first WiFi-based Skype phones were introduced so Skype users could make calls without sitting in front of their computer. In 2007, the company partnered with the British mobile operator 3 to introduce the Skypephone, a mobile phone that supported free Skype calls.

Today, here's [how Skype describes](#) their service:

Skype is for doing things together, whenever you're apart. Skype's text, voice and video make it simple to share experiences with the people that matter to you, wherever they are.

With Skype, you can share a story, celebrate a birthday, learn a language, hold a meeting, work with colleagues – just about anything you need to do together every day. You can use Skype on whatever works best for you - on your phone or computer or a TV with Skype on it. It is free to start using Skype



Starting at \$63.97
for the base version with
25% off for small churches

Download a free demo at:

www.donarius.com

1-888-479-4636

Nuverb Systems Inc.
"Software tailored for you"

"How to have more time for ministry!"

Do you want to save time, get more done and have fewer headaches? Then Donarius® Church Management Software will make it easy for you to track your members, contributions, pledges and more. Imagine what you can do with the extra time! Donarius® will also:

- Print your tax receipts
- Show the giving pattern of your members
- Print your church directories
- Send personalized letters, emails and text messages to keep your members informed

The Safe Online Social Network for Christian Families



Communicate with Friends

Read and Share Favorite Bible Passages

Post Photos for Trusted Friends to See

Share Prayer Requests

Interact with Others About Books, Movies, and Music

All Within
Parent-Defined
Boundaries

Join for Free at
www.hschooler.net

Hschooler.net

- to speak, see and instant message other people on Skype for example. You can even try out group video, with the latest version of Skype.

If you pay a little, you can do more things, in more ways, with more people – like call phones, access WiFi or send texts. You can pay as you go or buy a subscription, whatever works for you. And in the world of business, this means you can bring your entire ecosystem of workers, partners and customers together to get things done

How Does Skype Bring Power to the Kingdom?

Not long ago, I arrived at a coffee shop early for a

Bible study. I was surprised that early in the morning to find a young lady there with her laptop open. Apparently, she was using the free WiFi to carry on a video conversation with a friend who apparently was in another part of the world where timezones dictated 6am as the best time to stay connected.

Obviously, many missionaries have similarly discovered how Skype can help them stay connected to family, friends, and supporters back home, and with other missionaries elsewhere in their country or around the world. For those of us who stay in our comfortable homes and support those called by God to take the Gospel to the farthest corners of the world, it's been amazing to see how technology has advanced our ability to be part of this kingdom work. Only a couple of decades ago, it would take weeks for a letter from the field to reach us. More recently, e-mail has provided virtually instantaneous updates and enabled us to participate in timely prayer requests. Today, through technologies like Skype, we can now literally see into the mission field and provide encouragement to these servants of God.

Why I Don't Use Skype

When Skype first came out, a technically adept friend warned me about the [security holes](#) that Skype opens in your computer. Given the ownership and management changes over the years, and especially with Microsoft's upcoming ownership, it's likely that most of these issues have been or will be resolved. But, to be honest, I just don't have a burning need for Skype. My home telephone service includes free long distance and I have plenty of minutes on my cellphone that I don't use each month. E-mail works great for my purposes with my friends around the world and for the missionaries my family supports. Someday, that may change, in which case I'll carefully evaluate whether Skype is for me and I'll work hard on getting the right privacy settings ([this link is scary](#)). Or better yet, I might encourage my friends to try a safer [alternative](#).

It is my hope and prayer that these articles on the power and danger of technology will encourage you in



You want the freedom to

- ... reach out
- ... minister to people
- ... create fellowship
- ... contribute to your community

PowerChurch Plus was created for just that!

Membership

Accounting

Contributions

Events Calendar

Check In

Completely Integrated

We provide you with the tools to increase administrative efficiency and streamline accounting tasks, freeing you up to perform the work that matters.



CAMPBELL AWARD
User Satisfaction
2011

Install on your PC or network, or access online.
Choose which fits your needs.



We provide software tools, freeing you up to fulfill your mission.

www.PowerChurch.com • 800.486.1800

your daily walk with Christ. Whether it is the printing press, radio, television, personal computers, the Internet, mobility, or Skype, new technologies continue to advance our ability to know God and to serve Him, wherever we go.

Russ McGuire is an executive for a Fortune 100 company and the founder/co-founder of three technology start-ups. His latest entrepreneurial venture is Hschooler.net (<http://hschooler.net>), a social network for Christian families (especially homeschoolers) which is being built and run by three homeschooled students under Russ' direction.