

# UnderstandIT

From **MAY DAY CONSULTING LIMITED** in association with **FACILITATORS UK**

A publication designed to inform and enable businesses to understand the implications, costs and advantages of using Information and Communications Technology. Distributed through Chambers of Commerce.

## SKYPE – NOT NECESSARILY FREE

Skype, the Voice Over IP (VOIP) telephone service that offers “free” calls via the Internet is now being used by businesses both small and large.

Skype recently announced that it had downloaded the software to 100 million users. The exact number of users that actually use it regularly however, is probably no more than one tenth of that number. That is still a staggering achievement in just over 2 years.

For the smaller organisation who are using Skype via their existing computer systems that are equipped with sound cards, headphones and microphones, and using it to communicate with customers, suppliers and others, who are similarly equipped, then it is true, the cost is free.

However, if you begin to use the add-on services like Skype-in and Skype-out, then there are additional costs that can be over-looked.

With Skype-in, you can ‘rent’ a virtual telephone number in almost any city in the world and receive calls made to it on your laptop wherever you happen to be. You can therefore establish a presence in any city in the world for a modest subscription amount of €30 per year, or €10 for 3 months. Your local correspondents can then call you for the cost of a local call to the number that you have selected in that city.

Skype-out on the other hand allows you to buy credit with Skype and you can make off-network calls from your computer to any regular telephone number in the world at a very small per minute charge. The facility carries your telephone call from your computer to the nearest point on the internet to your destination number, and then uses the regular local telephone service to deliver the call to the required number.

The per minute costs depend on the destination, but are typically 1.2p for a large number of countries, with rates up to a maximum of around 8p per minute to some of the more obscure countries in the world.

For larger organisations, who are planning to use Skype on a larger scale, there are other potentially high costs involved. For example, with large numbers of users in an organisation, you could find that the demand on the Internet connection bandwidth may become stretched, perhaps affecting performance for other Internet related activity within the organisation. More bandwidth may therefore be required to meet the demand.

Some organisations are now installing phone systems (these used to be called PABXs – internal telephone systems) that are designed to function using the VOIP technology and the internet rather than the regular phone network. These systems are more expensive than the conventional phone systems.

On the other hand, some are using the new range of telephone instruments now becoming available that plug into your computer and act as a regular telephone. They also have the Skype software integrated into them, allowing calls to be made via your internet connection/PC as in a regular phone call. These new instruments are typically costing around £120 compared to say £40 for a conventional telephone. In an organisation of say 50-200 personnel, this can prove an expensive alternative.

Skype undoubtedly is proving extremely popular and the service quality is generally very good, but you do need to be aware of “hidden” costs that you might be faced with when committing to use this technology.

## SKYPE ONLY TRANSLATION SERVICES

Skype has recently introduced a personal interpreter service, aimed principally at business users who transact business internationally.

The service makes use of the existing facility for allowing teleconferencing calls involving upto 5 parties. A third party company Language Line Service offers online, personal translation services from english to almost 150 languages, via Skype for US\$2.99 per minute and is available 24 hours per day, 365/year.

## SKYPE FINALLY AVAILABLE FOR INTEL BASED APPLE MACS

After an aborted attempt to release a version of the Skype software for the new generation of Intel processor based Apple Macs, a working version is now available and can be downloaded from:

<http://www.skype.com/download>

The Mac version was originally launched 2 weeks ago, but was found not to work. Problems have now been rectified and the Mac version 1.4.0.49 is functioning correctly.

However, users of the Mac version still lag behind Windows users, since this version does not (yet) support video conversations.

## MS EXCEL TIPS AND TRICKS

It is some time since we carried an article that provided hints and tips on MS Excel, so this month we begin a series of articles on some of the lesser-known features within Excel.

The first feature is the ability to sort information contained in a table of information. The feature is called Data Sort, and it can be found under the text menu item DATA, then SORT. Before selecting the facility, you need to select the table of information that you wish to sort. The selection should include all of the rows and columns in your table that you wish to appear in the sorted result. See example below:

Artist	Title	Year	Publisher
1	Beatles	1965	Mercury
2	Alba	1975	Epic
3	Alba	1976	Epic
4	Alba	1977	Epic
5	Alba	1980	Epic
6	Alba	1976	AMM
7	Andre Previn	1974	HMV
8	Average White Band	1975	Atlantic
9	Barbra Streisand	1968	CBS
10	Bee Gees	1977	RSO
11	Bellamy Brothers	1976	Warner
12	Best Beach	1965	London
13	Bikini Orchestra	1977	Epic
14	Bob Connolly	1974	Transatlantic
15	Bob Preston	1968	Jay
16	Bob Preston	1972	AMM
17	Bob Dylan	1978	CBS
18	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
19	Bob Dylan & the waiters	1977	Island
20	Bob Newhart	1973	Warner

Now select DATA and SORT, and you will be presented with the following dialogue box:

Sort

Sort by: Year (Ascending)

Then by: Artist (Ascending)

Then by: (Ascending)

My data range has:  Header row

Options... OK Cancel

If your data contains a header row (as this one does), you select the HEADROW radio button and the SORT BY fields contain the header row cell names, as shown in this example of a list of records, with title, artist, year released etc.

You can then sort the list in up to 3 levels – in this case only two are used – by Year, then by Artist within each year. If your data has no header row, then select this option and the columns will just be referenced by letters of the alphabet.

Click on OK and the list will be sorted accordingly:

Artist	Title	Year	Publisher
1	Beatles	1965	Mercury
2	Barbra Streisand	1968	CBS
3	Bob Dylan	1968	Jay
4	Bob Dylan	1972	AMM
5	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
6	Bob Dylan & the waiters	1977	Island
7	Andre Previn	1974	HMV
8	Bob Connolly	1974	Transatlantic
9	Average White Band	1975	Atlantic
10	Alba	1975	Epic
11	Alba	1976	Epic
12	Alba	1977	Epic
13	Alba	1980	Epic
14	Bellamy Brothers	1976	Warner
15	Bee Gees	1977	RSO
16	Bee Gees	1977	RSO
17	Bikini Orchestra	1977	Epic
18	Bob Marley & the waiters	1977	Island
19	Bob Dylan	1978	CBS
20	Alba	1976	AMM
21	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
22	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
23	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
24	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
25	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
26	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS
27	Bob Dylan	1977	CBS

## MS INTERNET EXPLORER VERSION 7

In a recent edition of Understand IT, we briefly discussed the new version of Internet Explorer (Version 7) that was being prepared for release. You can now download a copy of the new browser from the link given below. Although feature complete, it is a beta test version, so please use with caution as it is not warranted nor is it yet fully supported by Microsoft.

You can download it from:

<http://www.microsoft.com/ie>

The new version has most of the features of its now fierce rival Mozilla Firefox. This includes the ability to display multiple web pages which appear as tabs across the top of the browser. It has a much more “streamlined” look, with less clutter and fewer buttons on the toolbars – see screenshot below:



Perhaps more importantly, Microsoft claim that it has considerably improved security features, to protect “you against malicious software, and help to keep your personal data safe from fraudulent websites and online phishing scams”

Whether this new version can halt the steady move from IE to Firefox or Opera, remains to be seen.

We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly, PC Pro, BBC and other reputable sources..

May Day Consulting Limited and your Chamber of Commerce have endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication, but do not accept liability for any inaccuracy or omission contained within it.

Information on other Business and IT services can be found on our web site at: <http://www.maydayconsulting.co.uk> or by calling Alan Finch on 07968 262079.

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