

NEW SKYPE ADS TAKE SWINGS AT FACEBOOK AND TWITTER



Skype is a way to stay in touch with people via video or voice. It's generally considered a communication tool, but its new advertising campaign in the U.S. and the UK would have you believe that it's more closely related to social networking – or maybe not. Recent billboard ads have taken jabs at popular social sites Facebook and Twitter. Skype was acquired last year by Microsoft for an astounding 8.5 billion dollars. Microsoft's new 12-million dollar campaign was last this week in both countries. The seven different ads, initiated in the UK and coming soon to the States, feature bold all-caps, each proclaiming that "It's time for Skype." The two ads specifically targeting Facebook and Twitter are the Facebook-centric "Upgrade from a Wall Post to a First Class Conversation," as well as this doozy: "140 Characters Doesn't Equal Staying in Touch," which mocks Twitter's 140-character limit per tweet. Skype also ridicules the one-sidedness and impersonality of emailing and texting, as opposed to a more direct connection between people talking or on video. The other five ads reflect this with: "When Did LOL Replace the Sound of Laughter," "When Did It Become Okay to Text Mum Happy Birthday," "Your One-Way Ticket Back to Humanity," "Humans Were Made to Look Listen and Feel" and "No Delays on Human Conversation." (The ads were posted at UK transportation hubs, which are the reason for such references as "one-way ticket" and "delays.") Interestingly, Microsoft has an investment in Facebook. In 2007, the company purchased a 1.6 percent stake in the social media site for nearly 240 million dollars. They both currently compete with one another in the online advertising market, but there was a time when Microsoft had display ads appearing on Facebook. The two are still working together in other areas such as Microsoft's search engine, Bing, with Facebook even being featured on Bing's toolbar. Facebook is also on good terms with Skype. Facebook's video-calling service is made possible by Skype, and Skype has added Facebook-to-Facebook calling into its desktop client. So maybe a Facebook wall post is indeed not a "first class conversation," but since Facebook friends can chat via video just like Skype, that doesn't seem to matter. There's even a new Skype application that will allow people to design their very own "Humoticon," which is essentially an emoticon based on a personal picture. It's an app available on Skype's Facebook page, yet another apparently friendly connection to Facebook. But is it, really? It's a way for users to create artificial facial expressions, so perhaps Skype is once again showing its superiority over a site such as Facebook. Why would someone be content with the fake version of a loved one's picture when they can just Skype one another and see the real thing? And that's the message that the ads seem to be pushing – Skype is the way to go.

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