

Where is the Skype User Base?

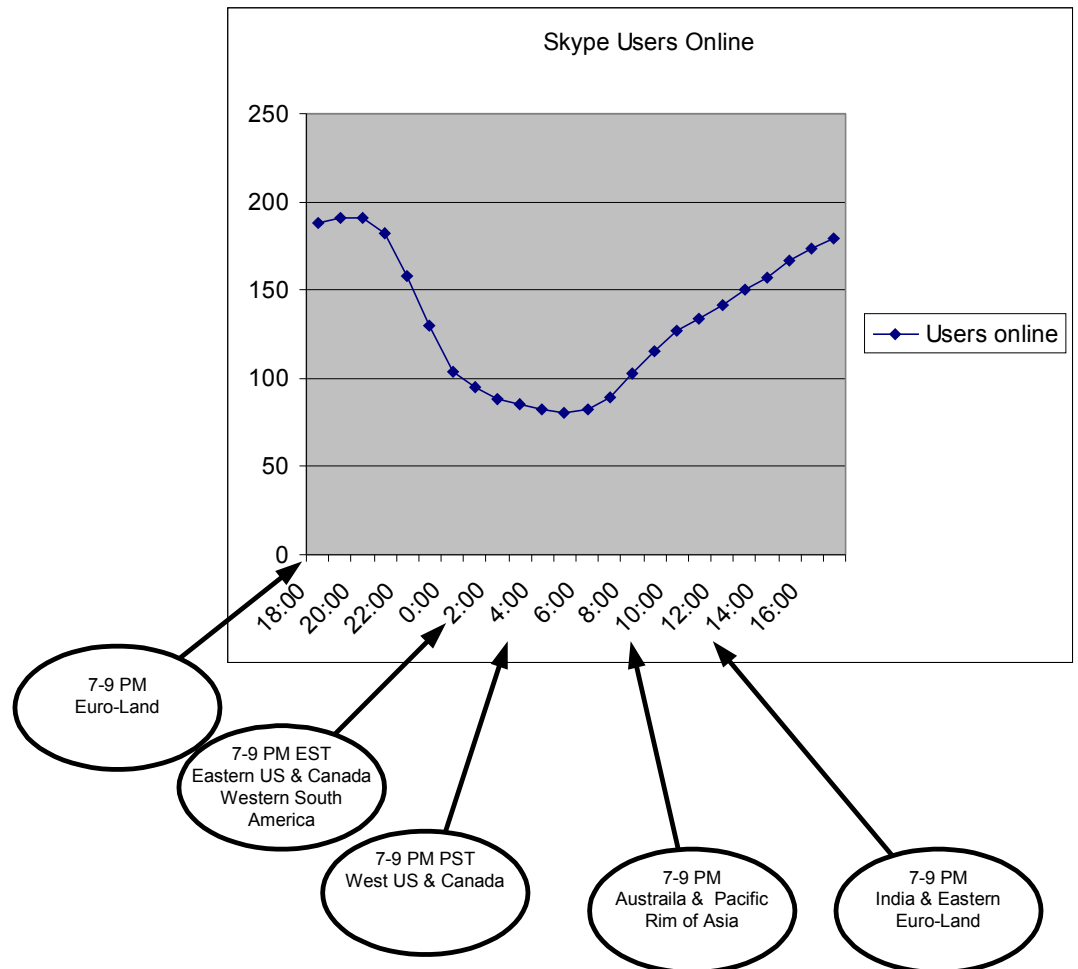
Ever wonder about that number on Skype's Start window #####
Users Online. What is the story being told as this number ebbs and
 flows throughout the day?

This inquiry got its start when Skyper frankgoesskype in Köln,
 Germany suggested to me that Skype was probably really gaining a
 foothold in the American market. Frankgoesskype's opinion
 probably got misshaped because while he was asleep strange
 things happened that could only be seen from my geographic
 position in Western Canada.

Thanks to Skypers
 rider45 and mallya for
 their help in collecting
 the data so I could sleep!
 I free both of them of any
 responsibility for any
 errors I make in
 interpreting the data.

I started with the
 assumption that the
 majority of Skype users
 use the product for
 personal
 communications. The
 most intensive use will be
 after dinner, around 7-8
 PM or thereabouts.

The graph below shows the number of Skype Users (Feb 4-5) versus GMT.
 Added at the bottom are the names of countries/population groups at their local
 prime time, i.e. 7-8 PM.



Of course all countries participate in the cumulative user-base 24 hours per day, because many are on line for 12 to twenty-four hours.

Also, some households like Moshe's, have 3 computers each using Skype plus he has another version at work.

If you look at when the 7-8 PM window opens in major time zones around the world you get a feeling for the size of the user-base by country.

It is interesting to see the low impact the USA has on the curve. This is the richest, most computer intensive culture!

What is going on here?

Are traditional telephone services substantially higher cost in Euro-land vs. the USA so free calls are less of an attractor in America?

Is Skype a late arriver on the US scene that has a well established base of Yahoo, Windows Messenger, NetMeeting, Vonage etc?

Does entry into the USA require more free functions, particularly conference calling in order to penetrate this market?

Does the voice quality have to be even better than it is currently to make headway in the US market? This will be a tough issue since all major vendors, according to the link below, are using the same technology that Skype is using.

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20040202005710&newsLang=en

Will the new Skype web site in Chinese, Korean and Japanese along with the language capabilities push the shape of the curve upwards?

It will be interesting to monitor the US levels after the publication last week of a cover story on Skype by Fortune Magazine (circulation > 800,000) a most prestigious business journal. After one week since publication there is no change in the download rate.

<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/technology/articles/0,15114,582208,00.html>

Does viral marketing really work in America? It certainly did for Kazza, but the instant monetary savings of downloading a CD are measured in dollars, while the savings in long distance are measured in cents.

Will Skype end up becoming a European Telco or a Global Telco?

Let's make the Skype Forum hot again... I think we are all tired of solving audio set up problems that need to be incorporated into the basic Skype program or talking to people who are using 350 MHz machines on dialup.