

Skype Buys Qik, Ups Ante on Mobile Video

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Skype says it is buying mobile video company Qik in an effort to improve its video chat offerings.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but Business Insider reports Skype may pay up to \$150 million for the company. The acquisition is expected to close later this month.

"We really believe that mobile video is one of the major, major areas of focus for the company moving forward," Skype CEO Tony Bates said during the company's announcement of the deal at CES on Thursday. "Qik is a compliment to what we do. They're incredibly strong at capturing video moments, streaming those moments, preserving those moments and then replaying those moments anywhere." Qik's service lets users upload and share videos directly from their handsets and is available on more than 200 Android, iOS, Symbian, BlackBerry and Windows Mobile devices. The company was founded in 2006 and is based in Redwood City, California, with an office in Moscow, Russia.

Skype plans to use Qik's technology to add recording, sharing and storing features to its video chat services. Video calling accounted for more than 40 percent of all Skype-to-Skype minutes in the second half of 2010, the company says. The company currently offers mobile video chat for iPhone, iPad and iPod touch owners.

The company also said that Verizon's new LTE smartphones with front- and rear-facing cameras would come pre-loaded with Skype's mobile video chat around the middle of this year.

Separately, Skype launched group video calling for consumers and businesses. The service is available to consumers as part of the company's premium plan and its new service for enterprise users. The company also said that Panasonic's upcoming line of Blu-ray players, Vizio's new Internet-enabled televisions and Sony's Bravia televisions would come equipped with Skype. Samsung and Panasonic, which first announced the addition of Skype to their televisions last year, plan to include the technology in their upcoming models.

Source URL (retrieved on 06/12/2013 - 4:10pm):

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