

# Skype Buying Group Message System GroupMe

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NEW YORK (AP) — Skype is expanding even before it gets absorbed by Microsoft Corp.

The online communications service said Monday that it plans to buy GroupMe, which provides group text messaging.

Skype lets users make calls, conduct video chats and send instant messages over the Web. Its basic services are free, while users pay for services such as calling regular phones from a computer.

The acquisition brings Skype into the quickly growing field of mobile group messaging, which has been rolled out on a variety of smartphone apps including one recently launched by Facebook. Skype already offers a number of group communication options, including Web-based conference calls and group video chats.

New York-based GroupMe was founded last year at a gathering called the TechCrunch Disrupt Hackathon. In addition to group texts, it offers conference calls, photo sharing and location sharing. Its services are free, though users have to pay for text messages they get or send.

Skype, a privately held company, did not say how much it will pay for GroupMe. Skype is based in Luxembourg and was founded in 2003.

Skype is itself being bought by Microsoft for \$8.5 billion. The deal was announced in May and the companies hope to close by the end of this year.

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