

1 Introduction

This article reviews a product called Skylook, which is a marvelous utility dedicated to optimising your use of Outlook with Skype, which is in itself an incredible tool that allows you to make free phone calls over the internet using a technology known as VoIP (Voice Over IP). Skype is one of those products that once you discover it you wonder how you ever managed without it, and, so by integrating Skype into Outlook, another product which many of us spend a large percentage of our day interacting with, Skylook can play a significant role in increasing your personal productivity. Of particular importance is the fact that it can automatically record phone conversations made via Skype and record these voice files into Outlook mail messages, thereby eliminating the need to write copious notes about what you discussed with someone.

2 What is Skype

A product that is currently revolutionising the telephony industry today is Skype™, which is a free Voice-over-IP service. Skype allows you to make telephone calls to either other Skype users (which are free calls), or to non-Skype users on conventional land-line and mobile telephone numbers using their SkypeOut facility. SkypeOut calls, while not free, are substantially less than the cost of making the equivalent international call via your standard long-distance carrier.



You make Skype calls via your internet connection using a standard computer microphone and speakers, or a headset (which combines both). There are even "IP" phones available now that connect to your computer or network via a USB port or a regular Ethernet connection. Such IP phones give you the conventional "telephone experience" but without the same cost of making regular phone calls.

At the time of writing (April 2008), over 300 million people have downloaded Skype, and the user population is growing by tens of thousands daily.

Given the ever-increasing population of Skype users, combined with the fact that Skype is being used more and more in business, there exists the need to maintain a database of Skype contacts and their Skype Names, plus their regular phone numbers. While one can do this in Skype, by far the most popular "database" for maintaining contacts is Microsoft Outlook.

This article looks at an important add-in for Outlook, namely Skylook. If you are currently an Outlook user and maintain your contacts in Outlook, either in your Personal Contacts folder or a Public Contacts folder, Skylook is the perfect add-in for Outlook.

3 What is Skylook

Skylook is an add-in for Microsoft® Outlook®, that allows you to control Skype directly from within Outlook. You can make Skype IP telephony calls, SkypeOut Skype calls to non-Skype users, and start Skype Instant Messenger chats directly from your contacts in Microsoft Outlook. So you can dial any of your Outlook contacts, on either their Skype, office, home or mobile/cellular telephone numbers, directly from the contact form. This saves you having to maintain a separate database in Skype for these same numbers and also means you have access to the other Outlook functionality that you may be employing to keep track of contacts (adding Journals to record phone calls, etc.).

Skylook then automatically records each voice or chat conversation, or SMS message into a Skylook Conversations folder. MX-Contact monitors this folder in the same way that it monitors the Inbox and Sent Items folder, and links these conversations to the relevant contacts and/or companies in MX-Contact.

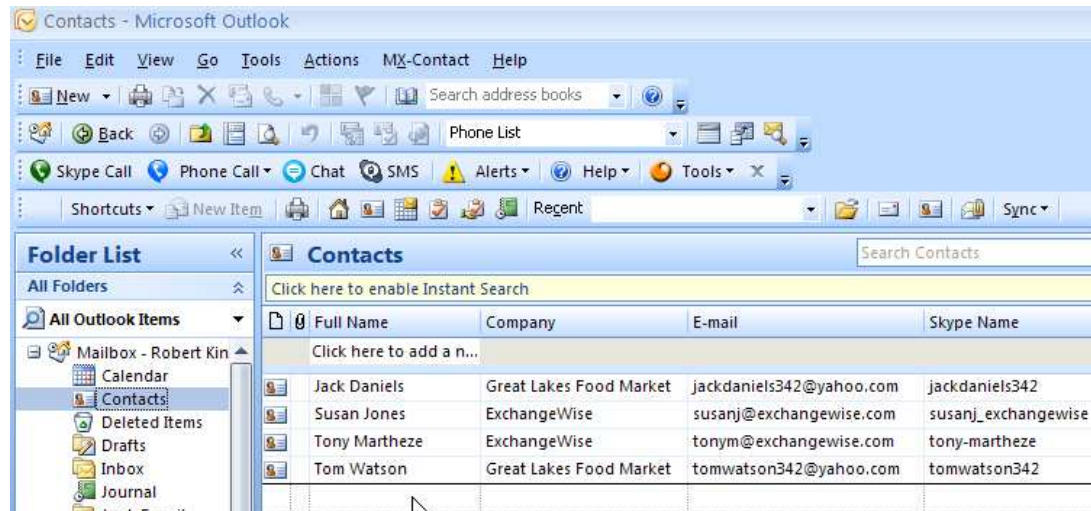
4 Installing Skylook

Download and install Skylook from the page below:

<http://www.skylook.biz/outlookwise>

Follow the instructions for installing and then synchronizing your Skype contacts with your Outlook Contacts.

Once Skylook is installed you should have your Skype contacts in your Personal Contacts folder, each with their corresponding Skype Name. This is stored in a custom field called **Skype Name**, which can be added to your Outlook view using the Field Chooser. In the example below, the user Robert King (with Skype ID **robertk_exchangewise**) has 2 Skype Contacts, namely Tom Watson and Jack Daniels. These have been added to Robert's Personal Contacts folder:



5 Using Skylook

5.1 Calling Contacts

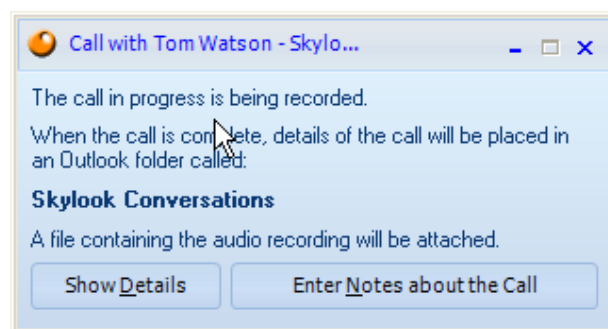
Now you can call any contact in your Personal Contacts list either on Skype, or on their office landline or mobile numbers, if you have a **SkypeOut** account.

Similarly you can have chat conversations with those contacts who have Skype accounts.

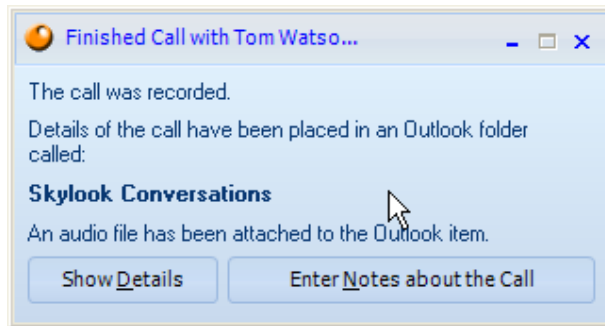
Each chat or voice conversation is recorded in the Skylook Conversations folder in MX-Contact.

5.2 Voice Conversations

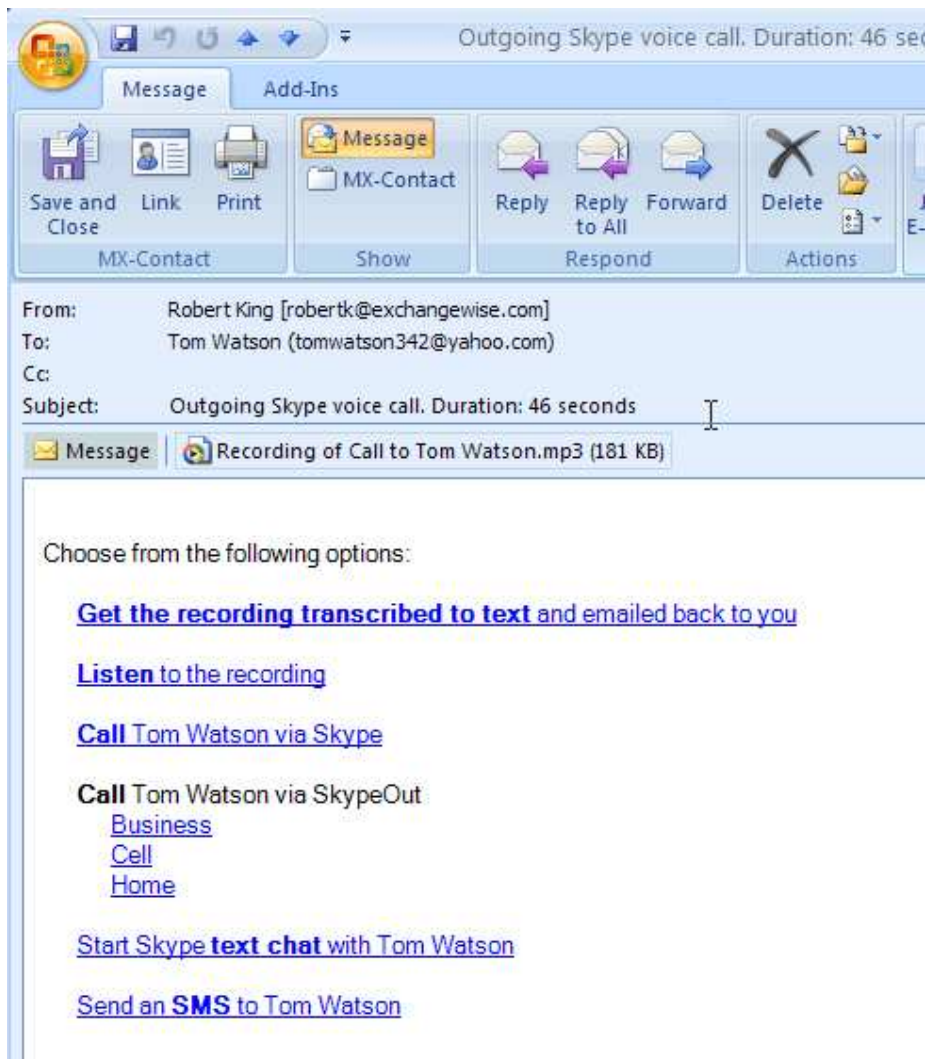
Once the call is complete it is saved to the Skylook **Conversations** folder, which is automatically created in your Outlook mailbox.



When the call concludes a message appears as shown below:



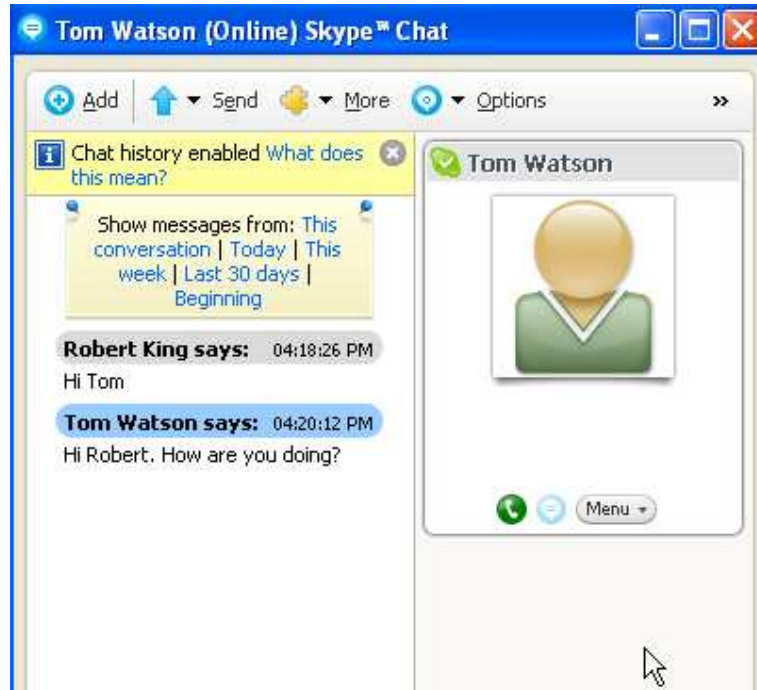
The details of the message are shown below:



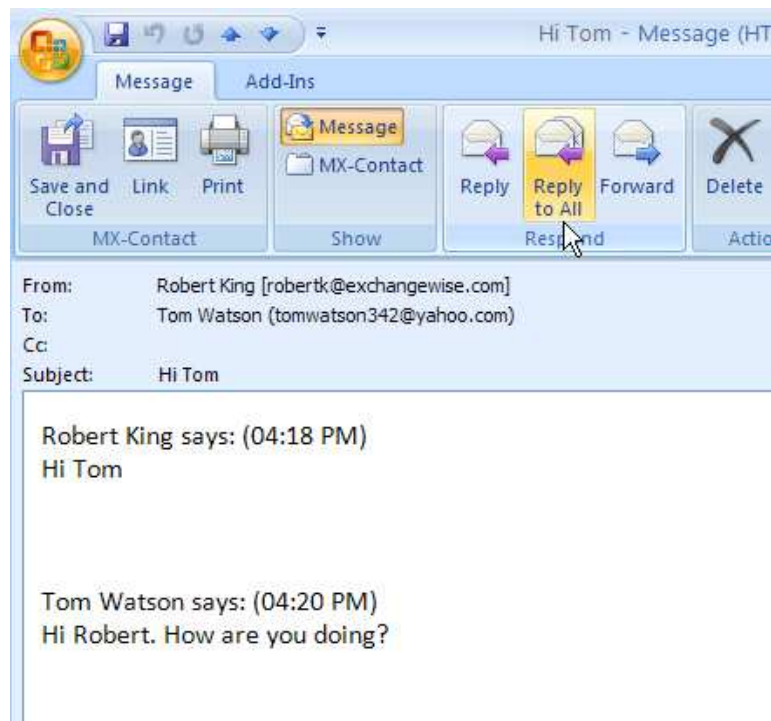
5.3 Chat Conversations

All chat conversations with Skype contacts are automatically recorded in an e-mail message in the Skylook Conversations folder:

As the chat conversation progresses the e-mail message is automatically updated:

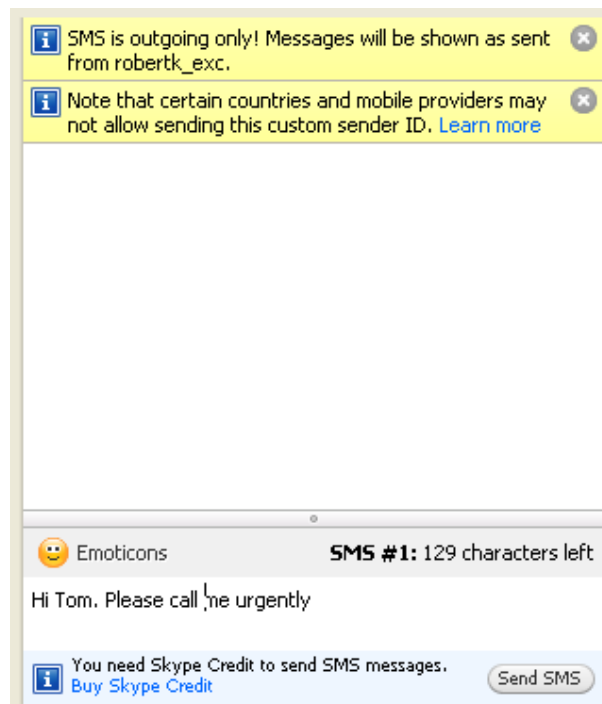


The text appears automatically in the e-mail message created by Skylook:



5.4 SMS Messages

With a SkypeOut account you can send SMS messages to your contacts via Skype. You can send the SMS directly from the contact form in Outlook (from the Add-Ins tab):



This is much easier than doing it on your phone and has the added advantage now that it is recorded in Outlook automatically:

6 MX-Contact: Extending Outlook's Functionality for CRM

If you're looking for an application to assist you with managing a contact list of some kind, whether it be customers, prospects, members, suppliers or whatever, and following up these contacts in a variety of ways, check out [MX-Contact](#). **MX-Contact** is a CRM, Contact Management and Sales Automation package that runs inside Microsoft Outlook 2000, 2002, 2003 or 2007. The system utilises all the standard functionality of Outlook but provides many additional features that transform Outlook into a powerful Contact Management and CRM system.

MX-Contact has 7 different versions available catering for a single user through to an enterprise with thousands of users, with data storage in an Outlook Data File, Exchange Server Public Folders, or Microsoft SQL Server

MX-Contact comprises a **Base System**, with optional **Sales, Marketing** and **Support** modules that can be added at any time. So you can use MX-Contact just for managing the contacts and/or companies you deal with, and the interactions (phone calls, e-mails, appointments, etc.) you have with them, plus use it to manage your sales opportunities, events and/or customer support incidents, by adding any of the available modules.

Because MX-Contact is an Outlook Add-In, and already has the capability to link e-mails to the relevant contacts in your MX-Contact Contacts list, MX-Contact has been integrated with Skylook so that all Skylook conversations are automatically linked to the relevant MX-Contact contact(s).

6.1 Calling Contacts

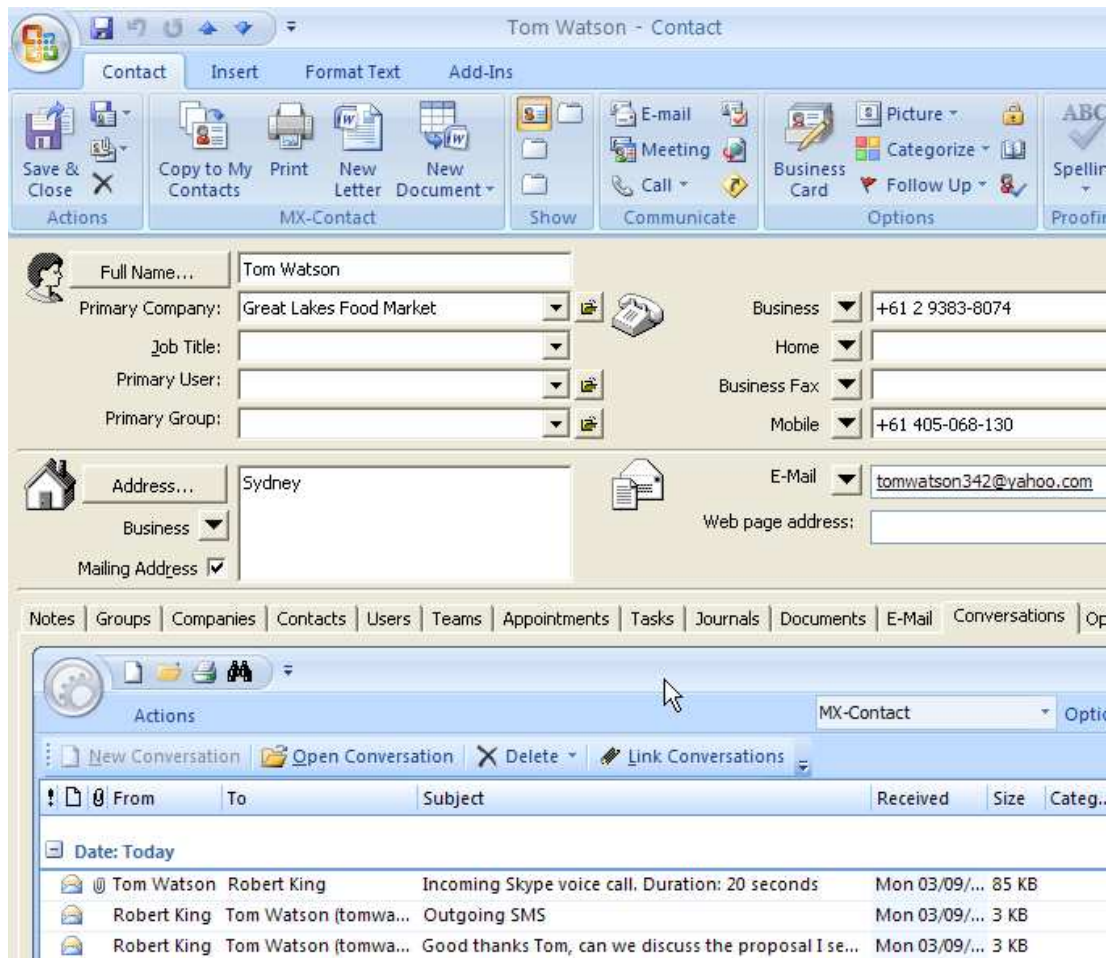
Now you can call any contact in your MX-Contact list either on Skype, or on their office landline or mobile numbers, if you have a **SkypeOut** account.

Similarly you can have chat conversations with those contacts who have Skype accounts.

Each chat or voice conversation is recorded in the Skylook Conversations folder in MX-Contact.

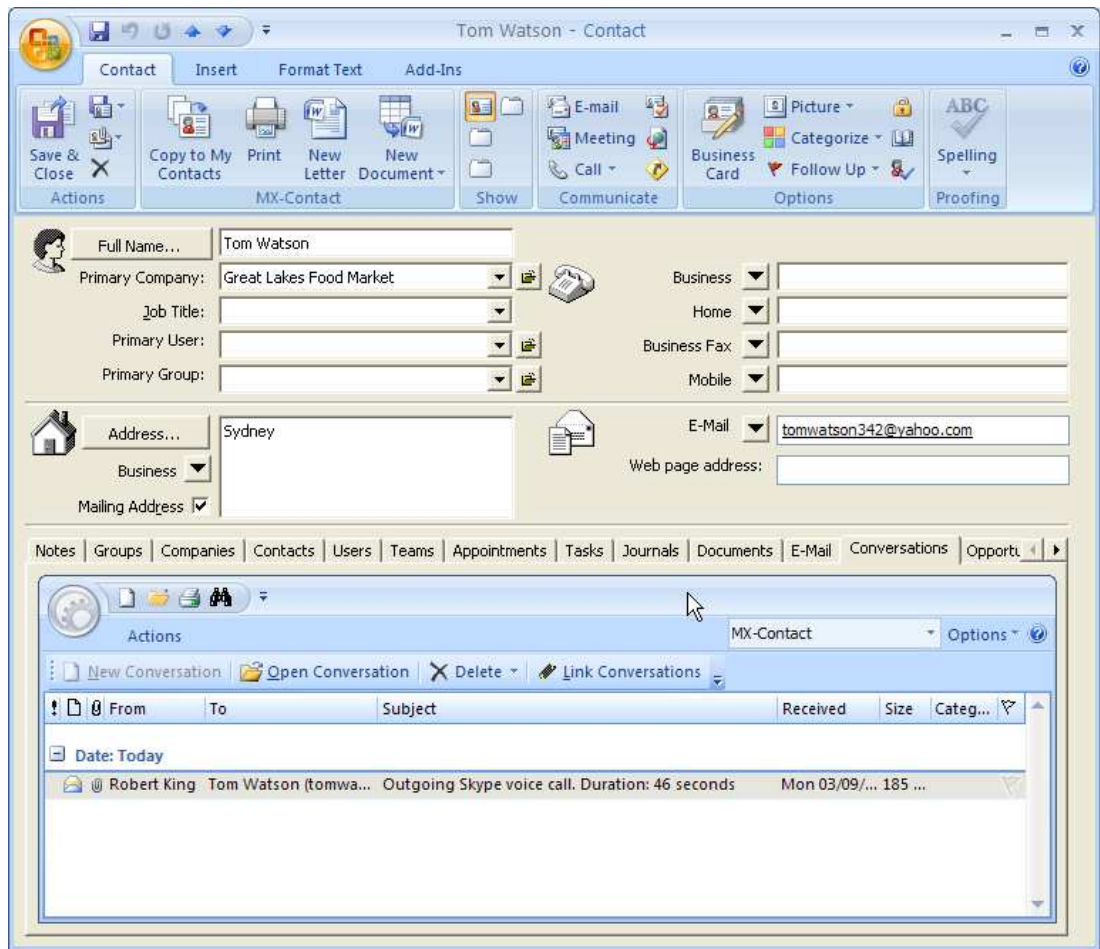
MX-Contact monitors this folder and automatically links the conversations to the relevant contacts and companies, and copies the messages to the **Conversations** folder in MX-Contact.

A new **Conversations** tab is visible on the Contact and Company forms. This will show all voice conversation, chat conversations and SMS messages between you and your contacts:

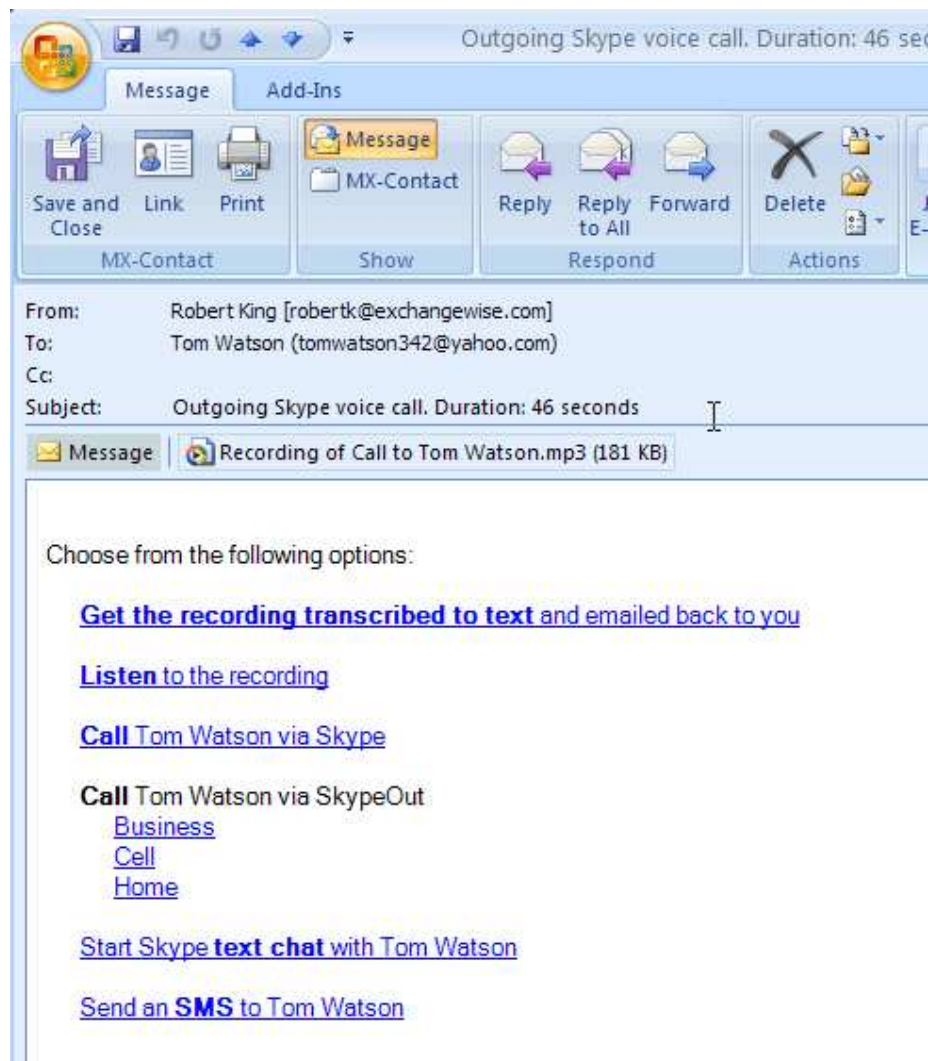


6.2 Voice Conversations

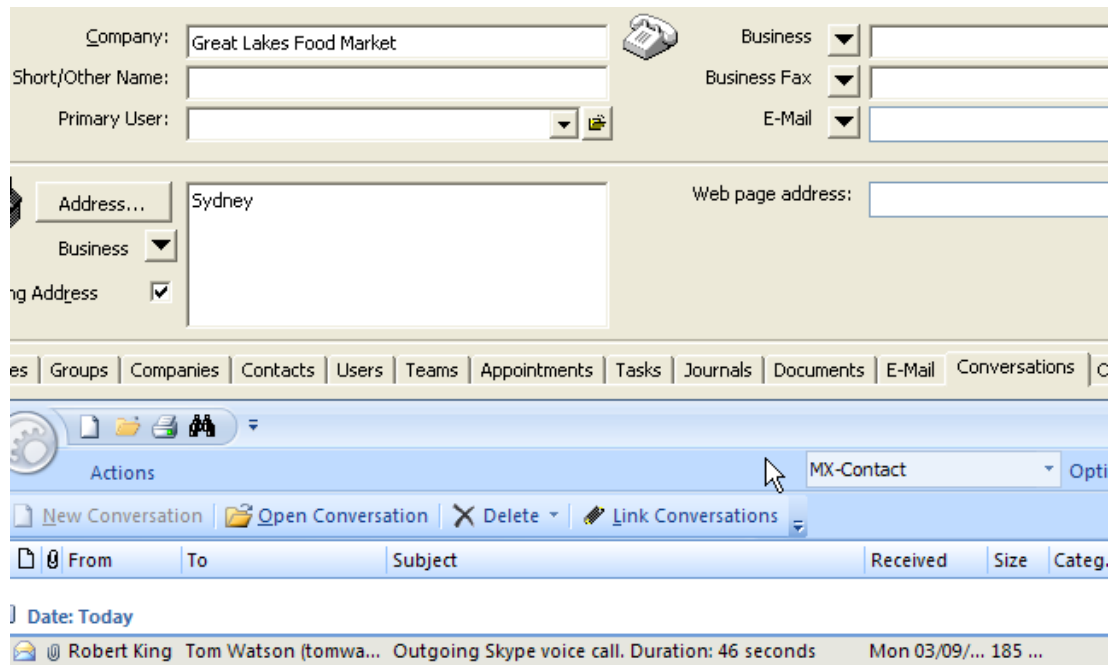
Once the call is complete it is saved to the Skylook Conversations folder and copied to MX-Contact.



The details of the message are shown below:

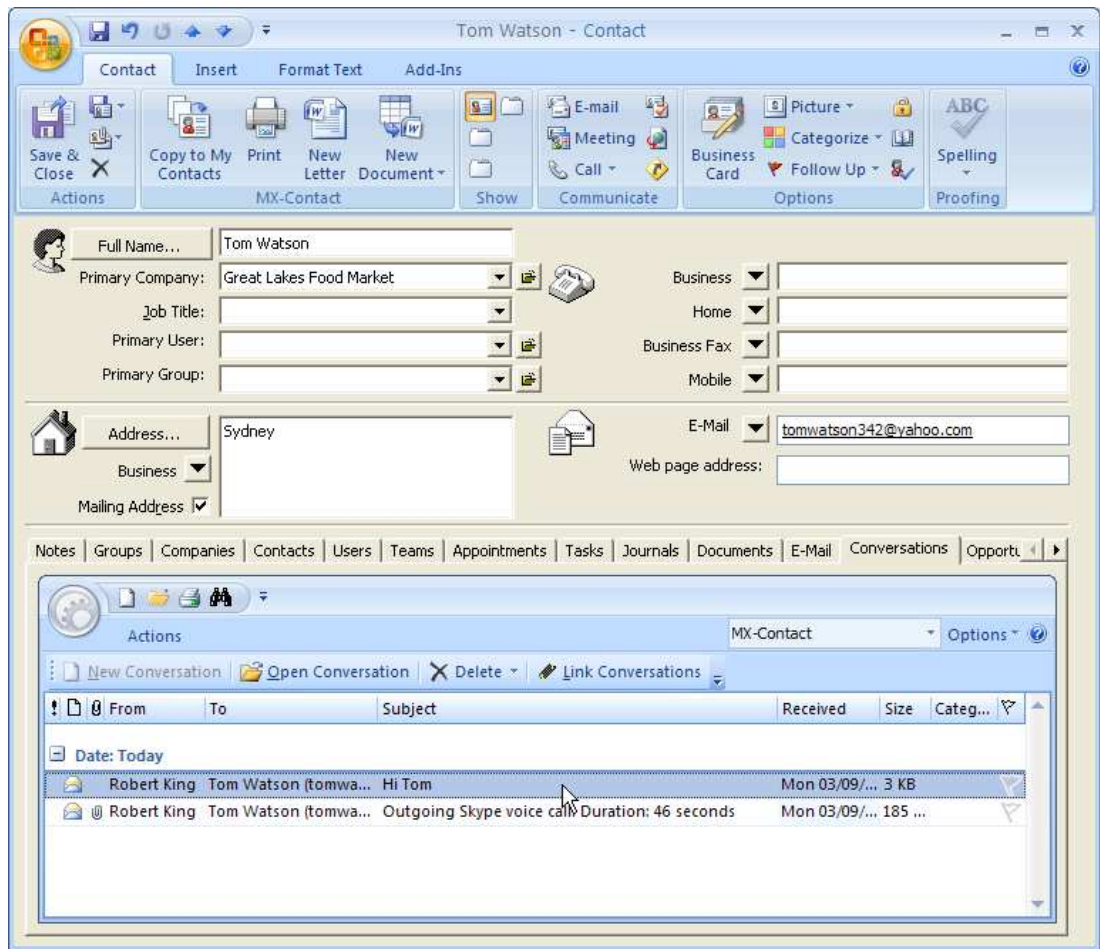


In the same way that an e-mail message is linked automatically to the contact's primary company, so too is a conversation:



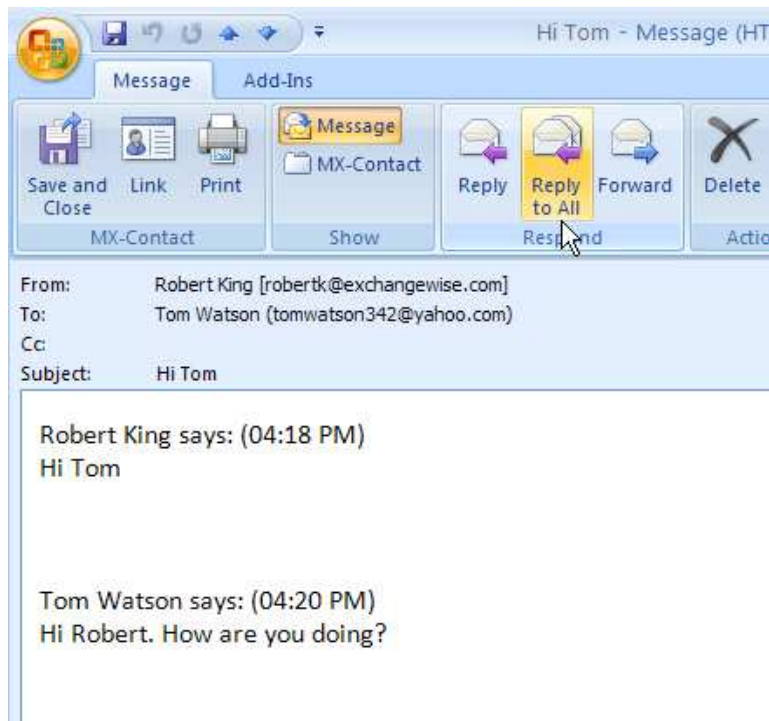
6.3 Chat Conversations

All chat conversations with Skype contacts automatically appear in MX-Contact:



As the chat conversation progresses the message in MX-Contact is automatically updated:

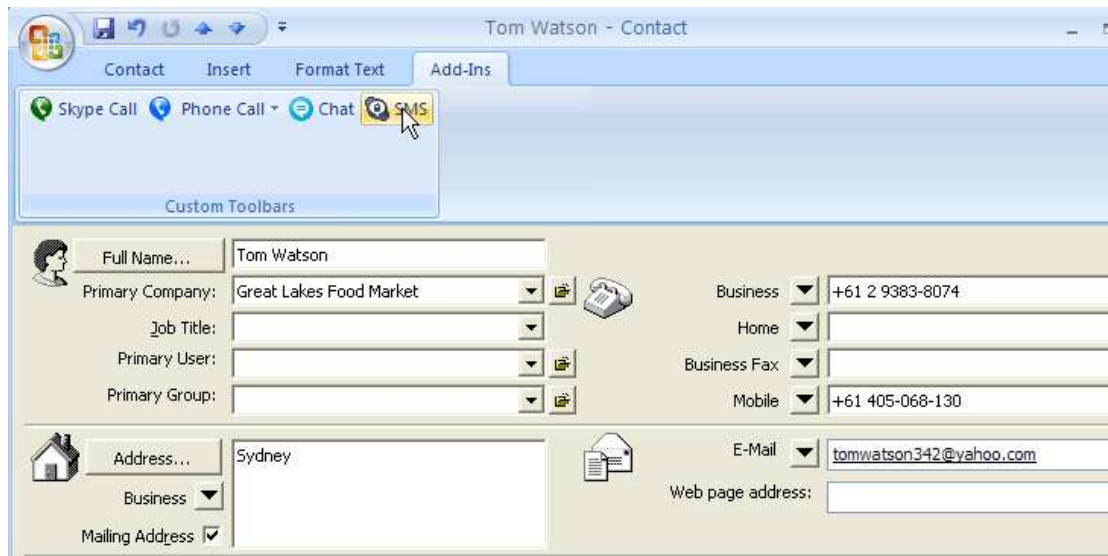
The text appears automatically in the e-mail message created by Skylook (which is then updated automatically into MX-Contact).

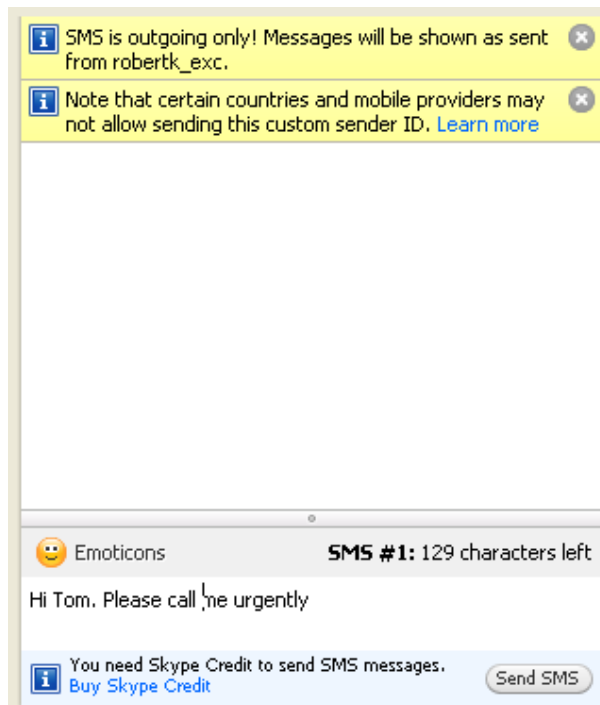


Thus a complete record is automatically maintained of chat conversations with business contacts. This is especially useful for support purposes where it is necessary to have the history centrally available and know how long each conversation took, etc.

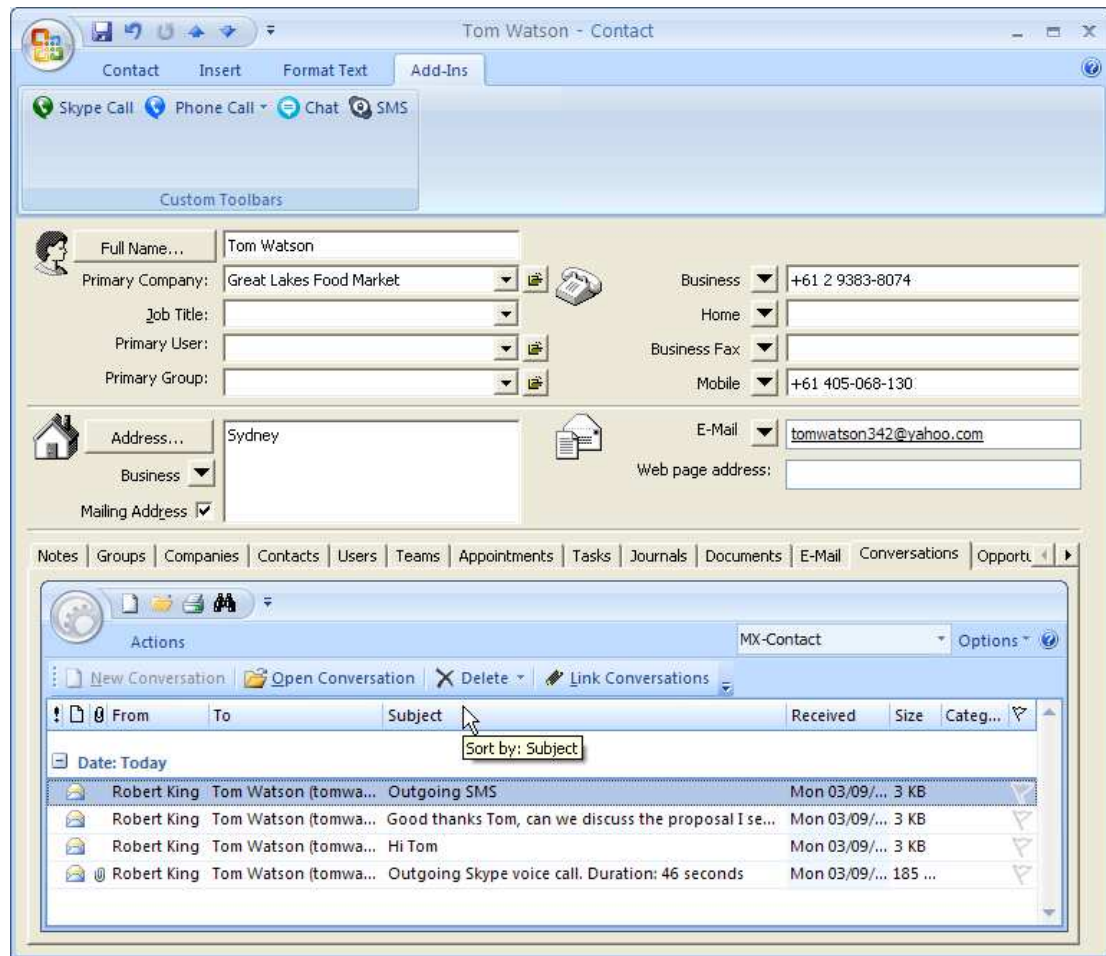
6.4 SMS Messages

As for standard Outlook contacts, you can send an SMS directly from the MX-Contact Contact form in Outlook:





This is much easier than doing it on your phone and has the added advantage now that it is recorded in MX-Contact automatically:



7 Implications of Skype and Skylook for CRM

The "Holy Grail" of CRM has always been "a single view of all customer-related information". However much of the communication with customers is voice communication and chat messages and typically this has been very difficult to record and share with other staff members. However all of that is now changing with the advent of Voice over IP (VoIP) services, in particular Skype.

With the addition of automated recording of voice, chat and SMS messages, we move one step closer to achieving the lofty goal of not only being able to record all communication with a customer automatically but also being able to (via MX-Contact) share that information with everyone in the organization. This is true CRM! The implications for both sales and support personnel are enormous. For sales it means the drudgery of recording details of customer interactions is now virtually eliminated. For support personnel this means the entire communication with the customer is visible to the other support staff, thereby ensuring continuity if one team member has to take over from another. There is never any argument about what was said to whom, as this detail is always available, and linked directly to the relevant contact.

8 About OutlookWise and ExchangeWise

[OutlookWise](#) is both a web site and newsletter aimed at keeping Microsoft® Outlook® users up-to-date with news, information and articles of interest on Outlook and Exchange Server, as well as reviews of add-on products and utilities, all geared to enhancing your knowledge of Outlook and increasing your productivity.

If you've found this article useful, please [subscribe to the monthly newsletter](#).

If you would like to contribute an idea or article, or tell us about an exciting product or utility that complements Outlook and/or Exchange Server, please feel free to [e-mail](#) us.

OutlookWise is a service to the Outlook community from [ExchangeWise](#), which is a specialist software company focusing on the development and marketing of applications and utilities that enhance the functionality of Microsoft Outlook and Exchange Server.

OutlookWise is edited by [Brian Drury](#), founder of ExchangeWise, and the architect of [MX-Contact](#), a CRM, Contact Management and Sales Automation System for Microsoft Outlook. Brian has over 20 years experience in the IT industry and has focused on CRM, Messaging and Collaboration systems for the last 14 years.