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Friday December 1, 2006

A Czech Skype Competitor Hits the Big Time

Categories: Free Downloads, Games & Entertainment, Instant Messaging & Video Chat, Mobile Software

Tags: IM, instant messaging, p2p, peer-to-peer, SightSpeed, Skype, VoIM, VoIP



What's the Czech word for rocket? Raketu, of course. Now that I've gotten that out of the way, I've got to issue a warning to the folks in Estonia whose app I've grown so fond of (the Baltic home to the engineering and R&D muscle behind Skype). There's

some engineering talent from Central Europe (the Czech Republic specifically) and the U.S. that's aiming to give Skype a run for its peer-to-peer glory.

Enter Raketu, a self-adapting peer-to-peer network communications and entertainment application. It has an exceedingly small footprint—a mere 3.4MB download—and requires a minimum of just 36kbps in bandwidth to maintain a connection (that's right, it will work with dial-up connections)

I just had an absolutely fascinating conversation with the CEO, President, and Founder of the company, Greg Parker. An astrophysicist among other things, he has a passion for the possibilities of peer-to-peer network applications dating back to pre-SETI days.



NO SUPERNODES • Raketu Science
Raketu does not use your computer for other users' communications.
Patent pending technology.
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So who should care about yet another peer-to-peer communications app? Anyone interested in the future of peer-to-peer networks, especially folks that might be drawn to an

absence of supernodes. The architecture of Skype requires that a certain number of peers on its network get elevated to supernode status; in a nutshell this means that such PCs have the requisite horsepower and constant bandwidth necessary to maintain and share a global index of users with other geographically nearby neighbors using the service. This architecture is one of the reasons that Skype works so well, and has therefore contributed to the success of Skype.

On the other hand, supernodes are made without real time permission or even notification of the user. Instead, everyone who downloads Skype agrees when they click acceptance of the user agreement to the future possibility of their PC becoming a supernode. This has made Skype somewhat of a pariah among the enterprise and corporate IT set that doesn't want such an app (for obvious reasons) on corporate networks.

The Raketu application and network, on the other hand, doesn't rely on a super node or global index; each client is responsible for informing a centralized server of its being available and for monitoring which of a user's contacts are online and available.

For now, Raketu shares a very similar feature set with Skype and the communications/instant messaging clients from Google, Yahoo!, Microsoft, and AOL. Not only that, Raketu users can communicate with their friends who are users of Yahoo!, MSN, AOL, ICQ, Google, and Skype instant messaging clients when they are online. In October, Raketu both launched its production version of the app and hit the milestone of 100,000 downloads. It is currently used in 150 countries and for now if you sign up for and pre-pay for a RakOut account you won't have to use any of your credit to call some 40 other countries.

Keep an eye open for an upcoming review over on PCmag.com, and we'll be following the space closely here on AppScout.

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