

# VoIP HACKS™

*Tips & Tools for Internet Telephony*



O'REILLY®

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**HACK**  
**#40**

## Skype with Your Home Phone

Combine high-tech VoIP with a low-tech analog phone to make VoIP palatable to even your technology-phobic spouse.

If you've worked with Skype for very long, you've probably become accustomed to its (mostly) good sound quality and friendly interface. However, I always have a hard time with how it feels to be speaking to a computer. Instead of the secure feeling of an old-school phone receiver, I am uncomfortable speaking into a USB headset or, worse still, speaking into my PowerBook's built-in microphone. For once, I just wish I had a good old-fashioned analog phone to slide up next to my ear—yes, even for Skype calls.

Fortunately, this is now possible. Using the Actiontec Internet Phone Wizard, a USB device for Windows PCs, you can integrate Skype with your old-fashioned residential-style phone. The device is sort of an analog telephone adapter (ATA) that allows your PC to act as a gateway between the analog phone and the Skype network. Too cool.

### Make the Connection

For this hack, you'll need a computer running Windows 2000 or newer and the Actiontec Internet Phone Wizard, pictured in Figure 3-16, which needs to connect to your PC's USB port. The two RJ11 ports on the device's back allow you to connect it to an analog phone and a plain-old telephone line. This pass-through connection allows you to place certain calls on your ordinary phone line if you prefer. That connection can also handle emergency calls (911), which is important, since Skype has no provision for 911 call routing.

Perhaps the wizard's most valuable characteristic is the way it translates Skype's features so that a traditional telephone can use them. For instance, when you receive a Skype call, the phone will ring and you can answer it; later, while you're still on that call, if you receive a second Skype call, your phone will use a call waiting signal to let you know another call is ringing in. This way, you can switch between two Skype callers as you would with call waiting on a legacy telephone line.

Also supported are conference calling and speed-dial integration. This way, you still can access your Skype buddies who have alphanumeric names by

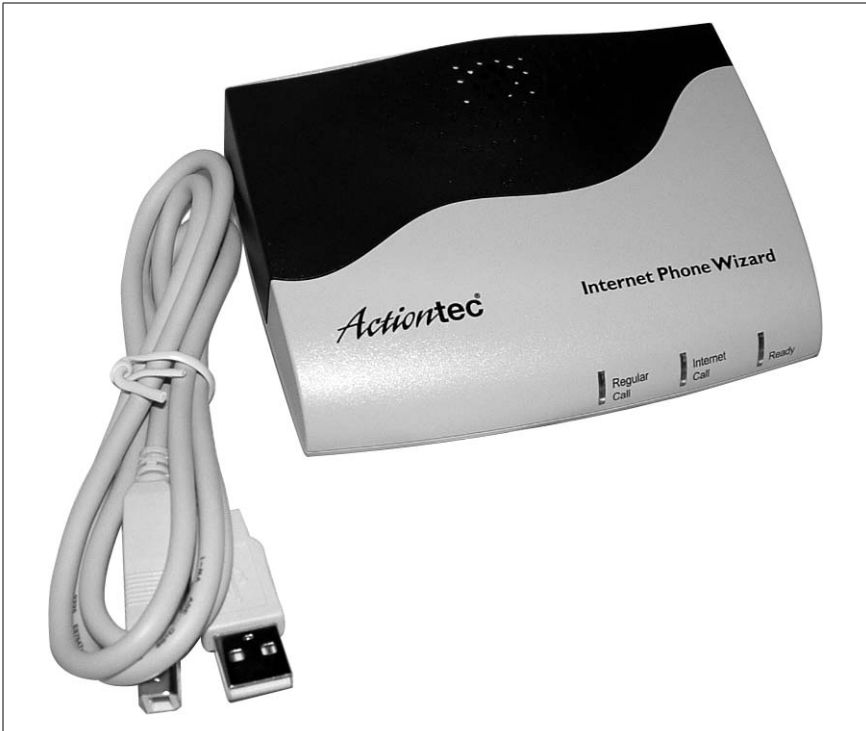


Figure 3-16. Actiontec's Internet Phone Wizard

dialing your telephone keypad, which has only telephone numbers. The wizard's included software lets you associate speed-dial numbers with contacts in your Skype buddy list, simplifying the act of calling them. Once you've run Actiontec's installer, your Skype buddy list will have an additional option in its contextual (right-click) menu: the Assign Speed-Dial option, shown in Figure 3-17. Click this option to define which two-digit speed-dial number to associate with each member of your buddy list. That way, when you want to Skype them using the attached phone, you need only press the speed-dial numbers.

Finally, the Internet Phone Wizard has two LEDs that indicate what type of call you're engaged in: a Skype call or a regular phone line call. It gets its power from the USB port, so that's one less power adapter to worry about, too. For more information about the Internet Phone Wizard, see its manufacturer's web site at <http://www.actiontec.com/>. To see how you can use the Internet Phone Wizard to provide Skype network access to an Asterisk PBX system, check out "Connect Asterisk to the Skype Network" [Hack #98].

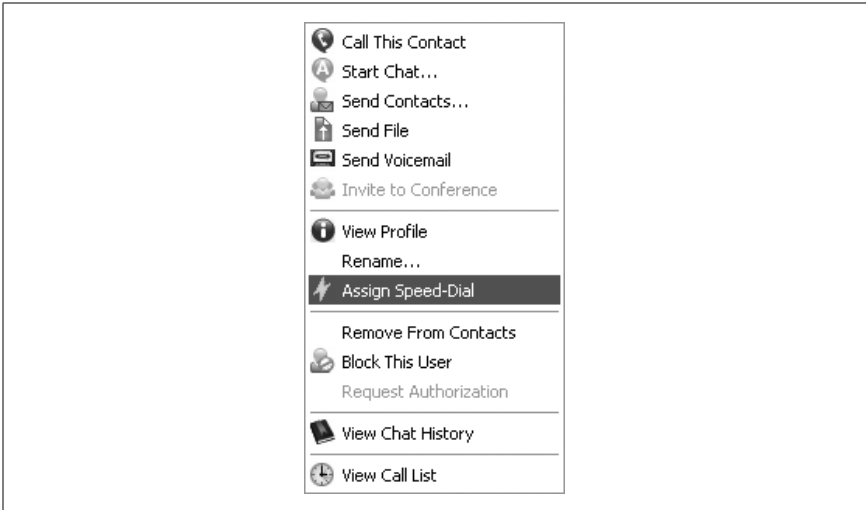


Figure 3-17. Skype's contextual menu with the Internet Phone Wizard installed