Skype + Podcast Recorder = SkypeCasters

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What's a SkypeCaster? Skypecasters are using Skype to create Podcasts! They have added a Podcast Recorder to their Skype install on Windows XP and are turning out clear sounding audio interviews with a couple of clicks. These are the instructions for creating your very own **SKYPE VOICE RECORDING SYSTEM**.

Many friends and colleagues have experienced the clarity of Skype with me. This same group also wants to go Podcasting. From Poets to Panels creating Podcasts from a lonely Windows PC seemed impossible. Well... turns out it isn't. Now you can interview, record and become the next big broadcasting stars on the Internet. This solution enables you to record a Skype conversation / conference with up to 4 people in it. This approach produces a standard "Wav" file using Windows Sound Recorder that can then be converted into an MP-3 suitable for Podcasting. The big benefit of using Skype Audio for recording voices is it is simply designed to make the clean and clear. Even better when your interview / broadcast recording studio can go global for nothing from a desk at home.

First **the disclaimer** and then the details. With help from well known Skyper Bill Campbell (The PT Company and Qzoxy) working in parallel we took the approach below and got it working on a number of laptops and desktops with Windows XP installed. We cannot validate or guarantee that you will have the same success. In principle it should be simple, it requires a VAC --- a set of Virtual Audio Cables and a little understanding. The VAC solution costs $40 and is purchased from one of those "hairy" looking internet sites. The software did arrive and with it almost instant gratification. We used this solution on both the latest Skype 1.0 and now the new 1.1 beta. While some steps in the instructions seem pedantic.. it only seems to work in this order. The install of the VAC should only be done when nothing else is running on your system.

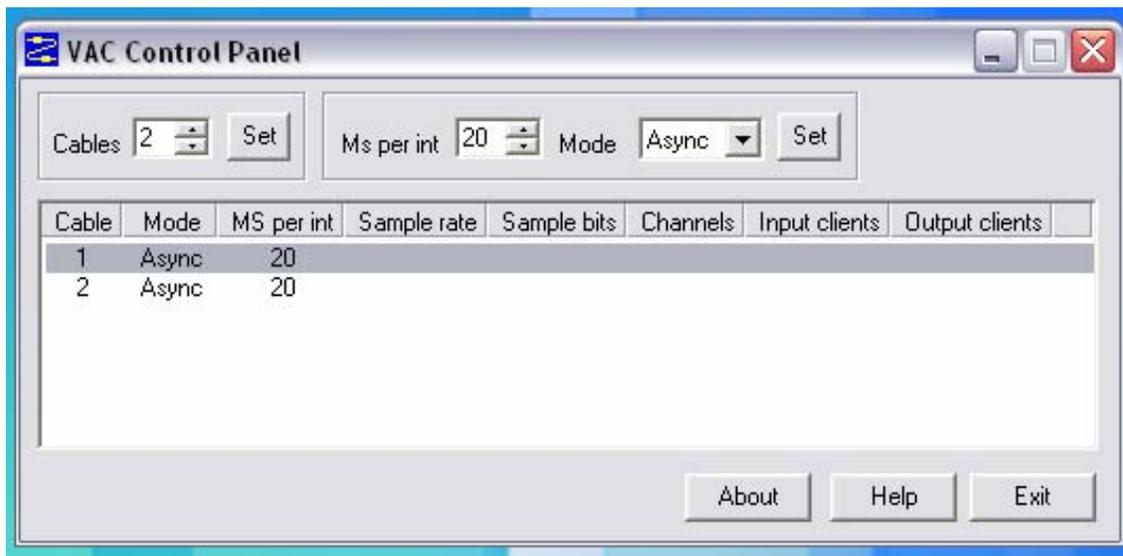**Connecting up a SKYPE VOICE RECORDER.**

First (you have WinXP) set Windows so you can run multiple profiles. For example run a pass protected personal account (eg "Stuart") and another with full admin capabilities eg "otheraccount" profile. Log in to your usual account. Download and install the latest Skype. Make sure the Skype / File / Options / Headset setting are set to your installed soundcard. Save and exit. Now hit the "log off" and "switch users" logging in to your "otheraccount" profile. Open Skype and create a new account with the account "name" for your "Skype_Recorder". Later you will conference in this Skype Account anytime you want to record a Skype Call with 1-3 other people. Save this account, test that it can make a call. Then "log off" the "other account" profile. Thus nothing on the Skype "other account" profile is running while you install the next step.

Now we need to install the **Virtual Audio Cables**. We recommend you create a hard restore point at this time. Thus if for any reason it doesn't work you can revert to an earlier setup. So make sure your system restore is working. Turn off the computer and restart.

Now you need to purchase in then install the VAC. What is VAC? From the Website....

> *Virtual Audio Cable is a Windows multimedia driver allowing you to transfer audio (wave) streams from one application to another. It creates a pair of Wave In/Out devices for each cable. Any application can send audio stream to Out device, and any other application can receive this stream from In device.* [Virtual Audio Cable Home Page](#)

Purchase and download the "PAID" version. The trial version is limited to "one" cable and <u>will not enable this solution</u>. Note once the Virtual Cable is installed it is not easy to remove. If you install the trial version thinking it will work, the simplest way to get back to the beginning is system restore. You have been warned again. Download VAC and extract the file. I simply unzipped it to a file "Virtual Cables". BEFORE YOU CLICK SETUP... make sure that Skype and all other programs are closed. Open the folder and then click setup. If your system is clean and you have not used the trial version it should install without any problems. In the default setting it creates one virtual audio cable. Now you get on the task manager... new program... go to Virtual Audio Cable and click the Control Panel.
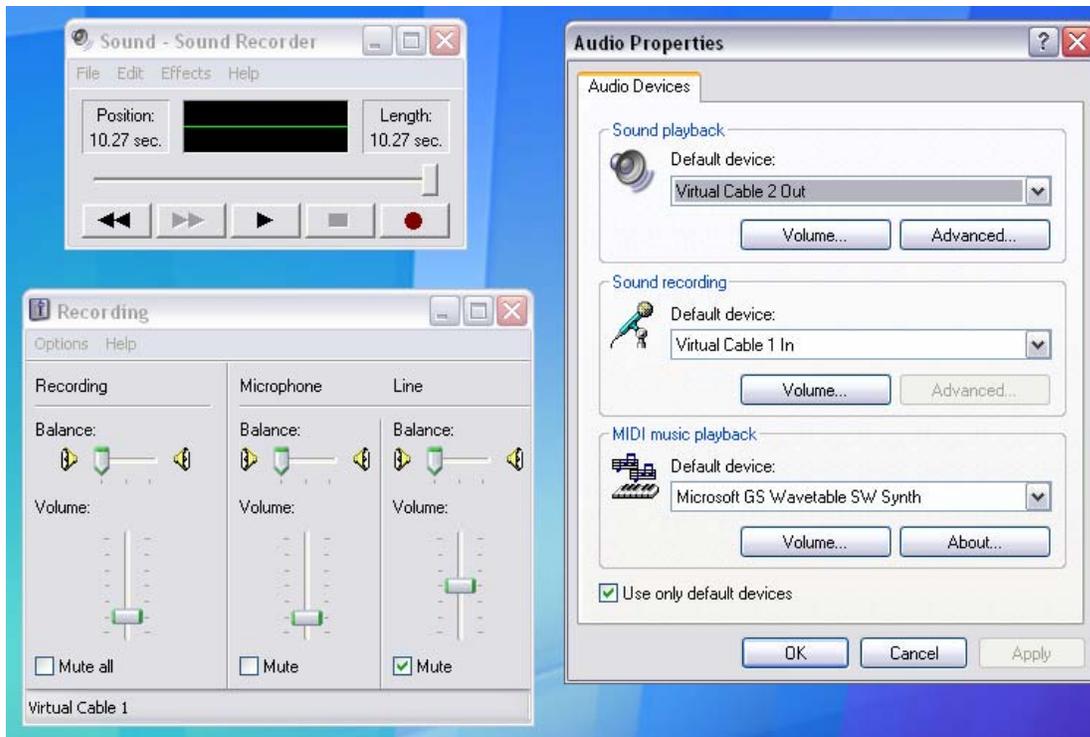

Change the cable setting to "2" it will close and you can then reopen it again to verify that you now have two VAC's. We didn't change anything else. Exit the control panel. AND JUST TO MAKE SURE.... Reboot your computer yet again.

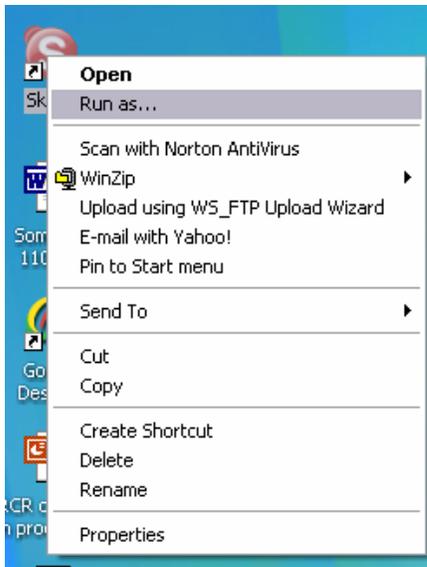**Hooking up Skype to Windows Sound Recorder**:

Start / All Programs / Accessories / Entertainment / Sound Recorder. Click - you should have the Windows Sound Recorder on your screen. Click "Edit" then - "Audio Options". Set the virtual cables as per the picture. Ie Sound Playback becomes Virtual Cable 2 Out and the Sound Recording setting becomes Virtual Cable 1 In. Apply and save the settings. NOTE if you are trying to listen to music now the sound is gone! To get that iTunes playing again later you will have to reset the Sound Playback to your nomal audio card.

Click the Volume on the sound recording. "The line-in setting must be "mute". Windows recorder seems to reset this each time un-muting it. We will come back to this in the final settings... (With more testing this test doesn't appear necessary) Close Windows Sound Recorder.

Setting Up your Skype_Recorder Profile:

Now we have to set up your Skype_Recorder profile you created on the "Guest" account at the beginning. This time we are going to access your "other account" profile from your main window. To add a second iteration of Skype. Right click on the Skype shortcut and then "run as" this will open up a new log-in option. Log in to your second "user profile" now. The profile for the Skype_Recorder you created at the beginning will launch. You now have two Skype instances running. Your personal Skype and one for the Recorder.
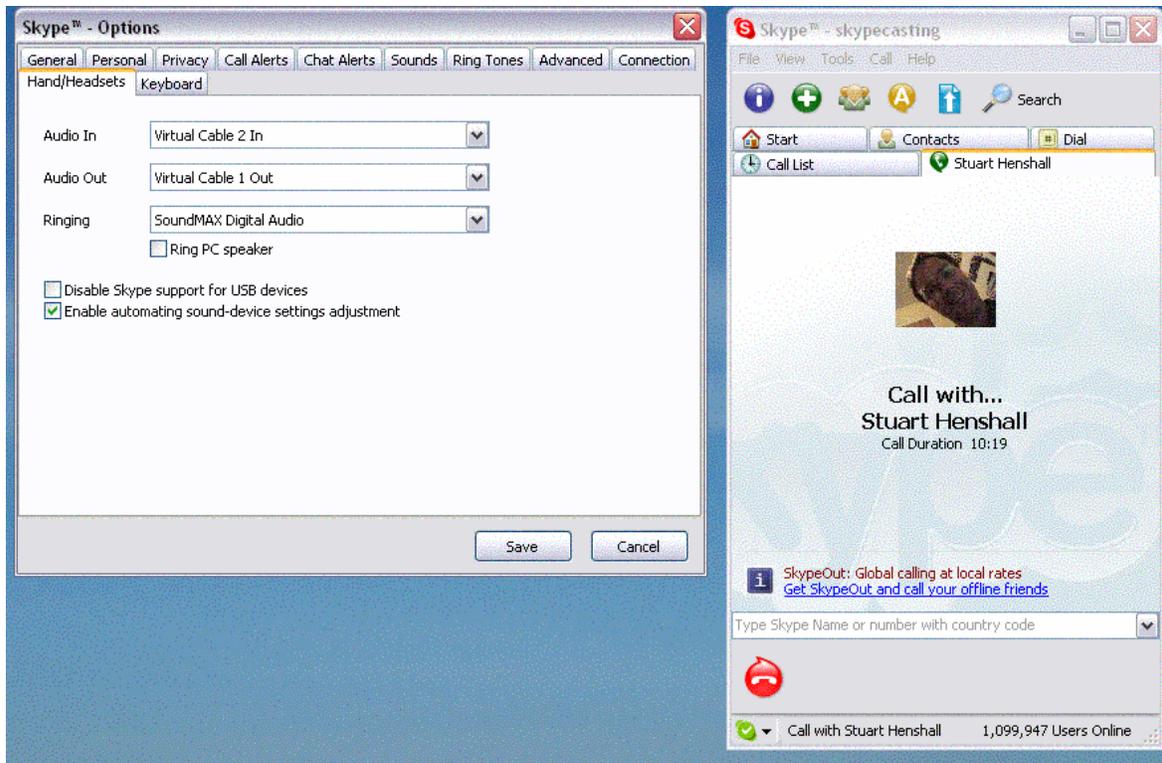
Note *this approach enables you to
run more than one Skype Profile.
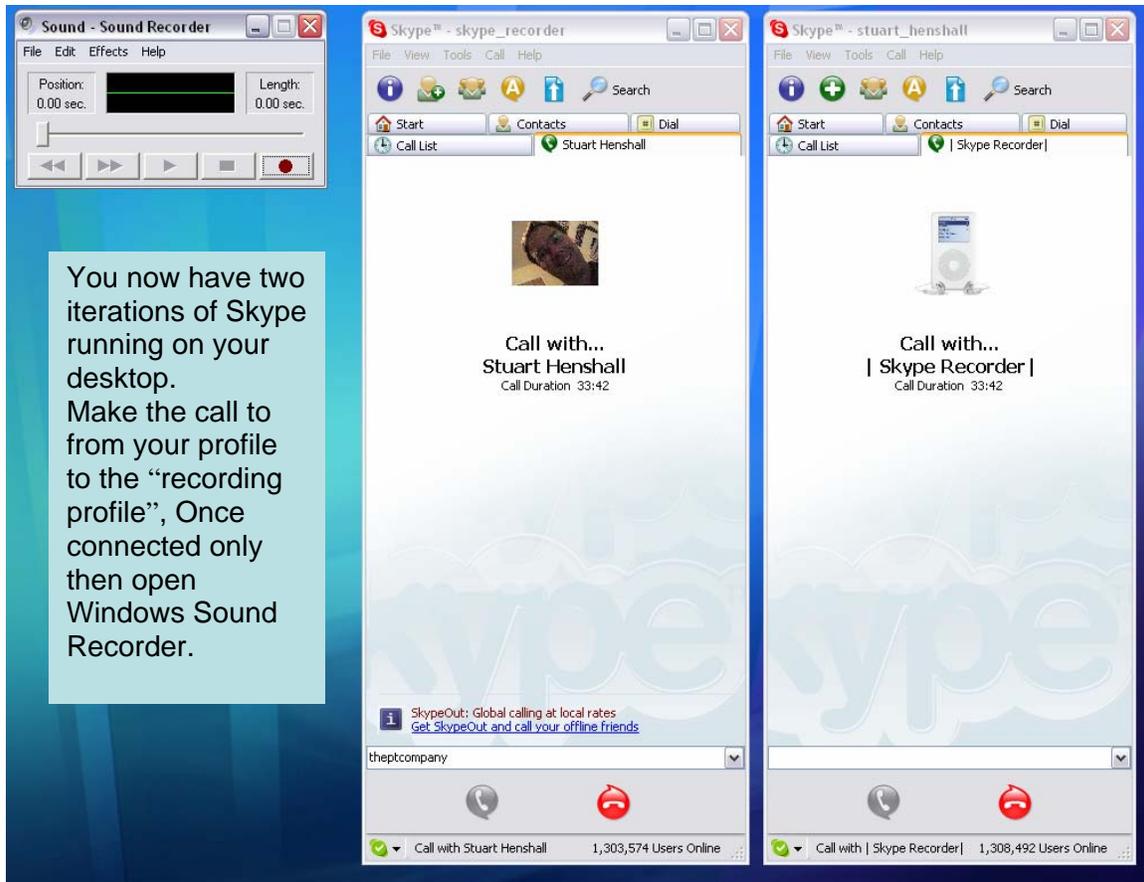Thus you can have a "family" Skype*

Setting Skype Recorder Options.

Now we need to set the "Skype Options" under the file tab so this all works. "File / Options / Hand / Headset. Set Audio In to Virtual Cable 2 In and Audio Out to Virtual Cable 1 Out. Now you have plugged this iteration of Skype into your Window's Recorder settings. There are a couple of more Skype options setting you should do. Under privacy only authorized users can call. And under Call Alerts... you should set this to answer automatically. BTW.. now would be a good time to request an authorization from the personal account you will be making all these podcast recordings from. Plus you can give it a "recording graphic for sharing in the conference". That's it for Skype iteration two. Leave it running.

Ok operating your Skype_Recorder. You should test this on your own machine and make sure it is running before going live. I'm assuming you have Skype running in both profiles. If Windows Sound Recorder is not open, don't open it until you have the two iterations of Skype connected. Skype won't connect and will give you an error otherwise. (It's ready to record 60 secs right now. We will extend the recording length soon) Ok. Click and connect with your Skype recorder -- ie call it. (I hope and pray it simply connects for you at this point! --- I had an install where it worked right and then didn't so who knows.) Ok you have the two iterations of Skype connected and visibly running. You could always put this call on hold should someone call.

You now have two iterations of Skype running on your desktop.
Make the call to from your profile to the "recording profile", Once connected only then open Windows Sound Recorder.

Now launch the Windows Sound Recorder. It should record straight away. <u>Note</u> if you just check your audio properties... (remember on the audio recorder.. Edit / audio properties. Those settings should be set to the cables as above). Click the recording "Volume control" --- make sure that "line in" is muted... *close the audio properties window. Windows Sound Recorder will not record with it open*. Skype and the Sound Recorder seem to automatically adjust for volume levels. That may take a little time into the call. I'm not sure if the recording mic level has any impact at all.

You should be ready to record. Headset on... connected via Skype to Skype (always first) hit the record button and start talking. You should see some action in the recording window. Run for 10 seconds, press stop and then press play. The recording will play back over your Skype_Recorder profile. Thus want to hear something someone just said... rewind that recorder to that position and press play... Everyone in the conversation will hear.
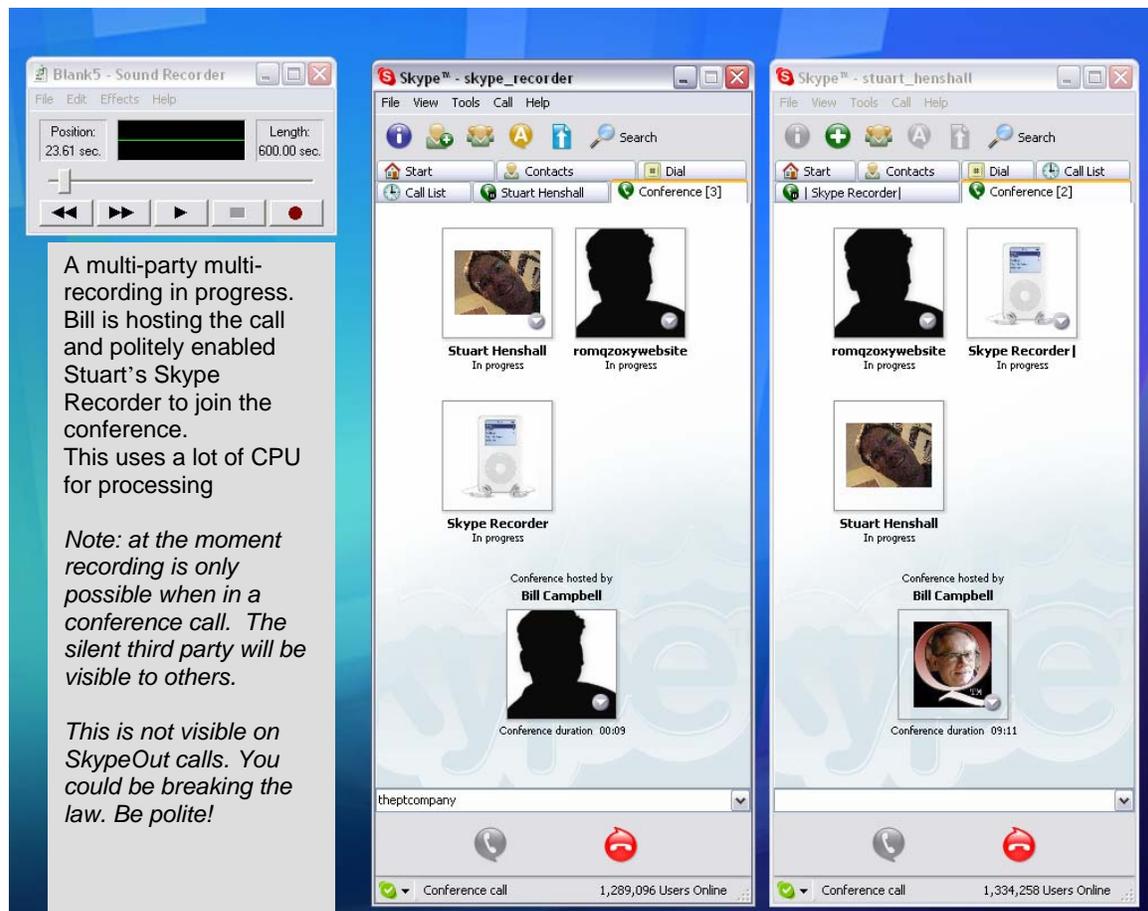
Now you know it works... Stay connected to your "Skype recorder profile" and go to your contacts list. Right click on the buddy you want to capture for your first podcast. "ADD TO CONFERENCE". Now you and your buddy are in the conference. Pressing the "record" button on Windows Sound Recorder will capture the audio from both of you. They will be amazed when you scroll it back and then play it back to them. They will want one too....

Note in the above picture my profile Stuart Henshall in a call with skype_recorder with the Windows Sound Recorder ready for action. Remember when inviting others

Be Nice! Only record with permission.
Never distribute podcasts without permission.
You could be breaking the law.

Note: From Testing results:

- *Solution works 100% (for us) of the time if you engage / call your Skype_Recorder profile before launching Windows Sound Recorder.*

- *It fails 100 % of the time to play back what was recorded if you start the Sound Recorder before initiating call to SkypePodCasting Client.*

- *So initiate your Skype Recorder call first, launch Windows Sound Recorder and check it works. Then you can go recording anytime. Even put your recorder on hold!*

A multi-party multi-recording in progress. Bill is hosting the call and politely enabled Stuart's Skype Recorder to join the conference.
This uses a lot of CPU for processing

Note: at the moment recording is only possible when in a conference call. The silent third party will be visible to others.

This is not visible on SkypeOut calls. You could be breaking the law. Be polite!

Now one last thing. It's helpful to have a "digital tape" that is longer than the one minute that Windows Sound Recorder is standard with. You can create this tape easily. Hang up the connection to your Skype recorder. In Sound Recorder click file new. Now let the record run for 60 seconds. You are creating a blank tape. Before saving it set it to a quality setting that will work for Skype. Suggest 16khz mono. You set this by going File / Properties / Convert Tab. Click ok. Your minute will be about 500K. (I can't wait till Skype give us a Stereo output and the ability to "stage" locations of people. Now File Save As "Blank1.wav. Go to edit and "insert" Blank1... insert it 9 times and you will have a 10 minute blank when you save this blank file (with no noise)... File save as Blank10.wav. Now you can create 10 minute recordings for converting to podcasts. (You can try other settings if the files are becoming too large. We are not sure they make much difference to the sound quality.) Just use the file open to load this blank before every session. Load and Insert five more for an hour... That's a big file! You can delete unused "blank space" using the "edit function when you stop recoding. Best you do this when you have finished the recording before saving under another name.

Finally having created your recording it's time to find a Wav to Mp-3 converter. There are lots out there on the web. Just be careful. Windows audio isn't very stable or well designed. I installed Total Recorder after installing all the above and it wiped the virtual cables. It required a system restore to set them back to working again.

That's it! Have fun and **Happy SkypeCasting!**

PS:
As long as your recorder playback setting is set to the Virtual Cable you will have a problem listening to music. Maybe someone can provide a solution or even use a couple of more virtual cables (you can use more than two...) to manage this. It may even be possible to use a third version of Skype with virtual cables listening to music..(however I think you will fail as Skype's audio codec is coded to enhance voice and earlier experiments with music suggest such a stream won't stream via Skype effectively.). so you could set up a third profile and add music to your calls.. Instead there must be a simple mixing program that can put a background soundtrack on a podcast recording off Skype. ANYONE WANT TO LET ME KNOW HOW TO DO THIS? What is required?

PPS:
It is possible for both parties to capture a recording. However, only one can hold the conference call. Thus the conference organizer must be able to call your Skype_Recorder. Under the settings used above you would have to authorize them.

As a final little warning… if you let anyone call your Skype_Recorder without authorization then you might find them listening in to your conversation. Particularly if it auto answers… you may end up broadcasting to someone you didn't even know called!