StumbleUpon, eBay Call Merger 'Talk Rumors'

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Both the StumbleUpon collaborative search site and eBay on Thursday shot down reports that the e-commerce giant plans to acquire StumbleUpon, but refused further comment on the possibility of a merger.

The talk occurred as Google prepared its own StumbleUpon-like feature, an unnamed pair of dice designed to enhance user searches.

"We cannot comment on merger speculation," said Rachel Petersen, a spokeswoman for the company. "But at this point it remains a private company. It's just a rumor."

"We have made no such announcement of any kind, and beyond that, we do not comment on rumors or speculation," said Hani Durzy, director of corporate communications at eBay.

The two companies did not confirm whether they were holding talks.

StumbleUpon allows users to rate certain Web sites via a toolbar button installed on their Web browser. Internet surfers can then hit a "stumble"

button and be directed to highly rated sites that likeminded users have frequented. It is intended to direct users to sites they might enjoy, but might not otherwise have "stumbled" upon in their regular Web browsing.

In December, StumbleUpon expanded those search results to include video.

News of the deal was first reported Wednesday by technology blog TechCrunch, which said StumbleUpon could expect to take home up to $50 million in the deal.

The blog first speculated that StumbleUpon was also being eyed by America Online and Google. Google this week, however, launched its own service that is very similar to StumbleUpon. Users install the Google search tab on their Web browser, click a pair of dice and are directed to sites based on a user's search history. Up to 50 new sites can be added. Users must download and install the button into the Google Toolbar, however.

A Recommendations tab can also be added to a Google customized home page.

"Don't expect very much at the beginning, but the more you build up your search history, and the more you use these features, the better they'll become," said Sep Kamvar, the engineering Lead for personalization, via the Google corporate blog. "Over time, we will give you more and better recommendations."

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