

Share phone pics with new service

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For many, a camera phone is a nice bit of technology to own, but somewhat without purpose. One new service is attempting to change that. Radar, a service from start-up Tiny Pictures, hopes to make photos from camera phones into a common way for friends to communicate with each other.

John Poisson, Radar's CEO, said he realized there was an available market for this while he was working for Sony Mobile in Japan, in a research & development capacity.

"We started looking at social dynamics," he said. "The (camera phone) device is really a communications device. It isn't just a digital camera."

He said the idea behind Radar is that instead of just snapping low-quality pictures with a camera phone and uploading them to a PC, users should be able to instantly communicate with pictures the way they can with phone calls and text messages.

After signing up for a free Radar account, users can take photos with their camera phone and then send them to Radar, which posts it on a user's personal channel.

Any other Radar users who were given access by the first user can then see the photo on the Web or on their phones, and respond or leave comments.

"It's as simple as snapping a picture and sending it to Radar," Poisson

said. "Friends can see the pictures as they happen."

Poisson said that the point of using Radar is not the photographs but the instant communication it provides.

"It's less about photo quality, and more about sharing them with friends," he said. "My channel is like a chronicle of what's going on in my life. It could be a picture of what I'm eating for lunch, or the intersection I'm waiting at, or anything. It's about sharing what I'm doing."

Poisson was quick to note that Radar is not meant to be the same as photo-blogging.

"We think this is a much more relevant use of the technology than photo-blogging," he said. "It's about the close connections you have in your life. Think of it as picture-based group instant messaging."

Poisson said Radar is a logical evolution of photography's history, combining the immediacy of Polaroid cameras with the ease of sharing from the digital-camera revolution.

"It's an extension of what photography is all about," he said. "It gives the ability to take a picture and instantly share it immediately with not just the people around you, but people around the world."

One of the big reasons Poisson expects Radar to catch on, he said, is that it doesn't require any more technology than many people already have.

"There's a lot of activity in the mobile (market) right now," he said. "It's all very tech-centric. Things are being built for high-end smart phones that aren't in the hands of a lot of the common people."

On the other hand, he said, Radar was intentionally designed to be used

by as many people as possible.

"This is designed for my little sister and my mother, and those kinds of people," he said.

"We put a lot of energy into making it accessible from day one," Poisson added. "It's a simple way for regular people with regular devices to stay in touch."

Poisson said that while Radar's growth since they went into public beta has been strong, he is more enthused by statistics showing that users who used Radar sparingly at first have begun spending more time with it.

"We've proven very sticky with users so far," he said.

Daniel Terdiman, blogger with CNet News, wrote that Radar has a chance to catch on if it resonates with users.

"It's unclear how many people would use Radar, but if it can bring some real utility to the camera phone, then it's likely to be a big hit," he said. "Time will tell."

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