

Social network for gamers helps friends play

July 22 2009, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Raptr, a social network targeting gamers, is hoping to make it easier to see what your friends are currently playing on a broad range of platforms such as the Xbox 360 and personal computers.

And if you want, you can join them in the action.

On Wednesday, Raptr launched new software that integrates various instant-messaging services, as well as [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and automatically updates users' status with the games they are currently playing.

It recognizes about 32,000 games, including hardcore titles like "Halo 3," music games like "Guitar Hero" and social games such as Zynga's "YoVille" on Facebook.

And if your friend is in the midst of a multiplayer game, you can join in, provided you've installed Raptr on your computer, for free.

"Most people prefer to play with friends, ... but finding friends and playing with them is hard," CEO and founder Dennis Fong said. "Your friends are everywhere, and they play games on a lot of different platforms."

Raptr is expanding its service as more people play video games online and social networks proliferate in use. Combining the two, Raptr is like a Facebook for gamers.

Using the service, PC gamers can chat with users of Microsoft Corp.'s [Xbox 360](#), though Raptr does not yet support the other gaming consoles, Sony Corp.'s [PlayStation 3](#) and Nintendo Co.'s [Wii](#).

The Mountain, Calif.-based startup also signed deals with two major video game publishers to bundle its service with upcoming titles, which will expose its service to many more gamers.

No money changed hands, Fong said, between Raptr and the [game](#) companies, THQ Inc. and Activision Blizzard Inc.

Raptr isn't the first gaming venture for Fong, a former professional video gaming champion. In 2006, he sold Xfire to Viacom Inc. for \$102 million. Incidentally, Xfire is similar to Raptr in that it helps gamers keep track of people playing PC games, but it's targeted at hardcore gamers who play titles like "World of Warcraft," "Counter-Strike" and "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare."

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