

# MySpace outlines makeover after exec shake up

March 10 2010, By RYAN NAKASHIMA , AP Business Writer

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In this photo released Tuesday March 9, 2010 by MySpace showing Jason Hirschhorn, 38, left, and Mike Jones, 34 right at the MySpace headquarters in Beverly Hills, Calif. on Monday March 8, 2010. The two new co-presidents of MySpace were announced this week following the abrupt departure of CEO Owen Van Natta in February after just 10 months on the job. (AP Photo/MySpace) NO SALES

(AP) -- Long-ago lapped by Facebook in popularity and with fast-growing Twitter on its tail, social networking site MySpace is planning a series of updates over the next months that will link its users' posts to those sites more easily and carve out its niche as an entertainment hub more clearly.

Those changes, among others, were unveiled by co-presidents Jason Hirschhorn, 38, and Mike Jones, 34, this week following the abrupt

departure of CEO Owen Van Natta in February after just 10 months on the job.

The two remaining executives, who once shared a single office with Van Natta and now remain in it together, declined to comment much on Van Natta's departure, other than to say his decision to leave was between him and parent News Corp.'s chief digital officer Jonathan Miller.

They also shed no new light on the ongoing ad-sharing deal with [Google Inc.](#), which forms the backbone of MySpace's revenue but expires in August.

"Owen's decision and Jon's decision were their own. Jon came to us and said, 'Would you like to be co-presidents?' We said, 'Hell yeah.' We didn't have to move our desks," Hirschhorn said in an interview at the Beverly Hills headquarters. "We were very much operating the company from a day-to-day basis and believed in the strategy that we laid out with Owen, frankly."

Attempts to reach Van Natta were unsuccessful.

The executives acknowledged that change has been slow coming to the site, and critics have often cited its clunkiness compared to Facebook.

MySpace's monthly visitors declined 7 percent in January from a year ago to 120 million worldwide, compared to Facebook's 471 million visitors, a 100 percent increase, according to Internet tracker [comScore Inc.](#) Twitter grew 1,100 percent to 74 million visitors over the same time.

The goal of changes in the works now is about "making sure we return to the consumer zeitgeist," Jones said, not about competing feature-for-feature with other social networks.

Hirschhorn said that [MySpace](#) needs to be more uniquely focused on the 14 million musicians who put songs and videos on the site and how fans interact with them, and is giving more control to artists over their profiles, including with tracking tools. The site is also going open up its platform for games more widely, add a movie fan page, and reward users who act as evangelizers of content.

"The experience that Mike and I and the teams aim to build is such that it's a complement to your experience on Facebook," he said.

While Jones said the pair did not feel "specific pressure" from [News Corp.](#) to change how the site earns revenue, he described a time frame that was fairly short - through August and through the company's fiscal year, which ends in June.

"I think we have everything lined up strategically to where it needs to be," Jones said. "It's about us operationally executing on all of this, keeping pressure on the organization to get refocused on the committed strategy."

The two helped shut down some projects that spread resources too thinly and tread on needs well served by the likes of portal sites such as Yahoo or AOL. Such segments focused on cars, parenting, weather, horoscopes, classified ads and jobs.

Now the site is refocusing its gaze on the core 13-34 age group that represents more than half of its visitors and 84 percent of all the time spent on the site.

Some changes include a better, smarter "stream" that allows users to see more of what their friends are doing in a central location, resembling Facebook's "News Feed" more closely. Previously, videos added by users would not appear on friend's streams, for example.

The site is also rolling out a "Super Post" update bar that allows users to post links, videos and updates to MySpace, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) all at once.

And in a change that symbolizes it is really putting its past behind it, MySpace co-founder Tom Anderson, a smiling guy looking back across his white T-shirt, recently stopped being every new user's first friend.

Since last month, he's been replaced by the cleverly named profile, Today On MySpace (T.O.M.), which features new songs, movie clips and celebrity updates and starts feeding into the new users' stream right away.

That leaves new users with a better sense of what MySpace has to offer, rather than leaving them with one friend and clueless, Jones said.

"We were just like, 'We're not going to tell you what to do here, we're not going to guide you. You're welcome to here, and go figure something out,'" Jones said. "Now we're saying, 'OK we're going to give you some guidance.'"

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