

# MySpace upping ante in online social games

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"We initially embraced games a few years back with a gaming platform, but at the end of the day it was fairly isolated in certain parts of MySpace," MySpace co-president Mike Jones told AFP at a Game Developers Conference here.

"MySpace is going to put as much weight behind games as we put behind music."

After being eclipsed by online social networking star Facebook,

MySpace made itself into an Internet community for people who make or love music.

MySpace sees its prime demographic as Internet users between the ages of 14 and 36.

The social network claims more than 100 million users, about 30 percent of whom rack up about a total of a billion minutes of online game play each month.

Jones believes that by better weaving online games into the fabric of the online community those figures can be doubled to 60 percent of MySpace users logging more than two billion minutes of play monthly.

MySpace is striving to reclaim lost glory and expand its popularity in a social networking world dominated by Facebook, which boasts more than 400 million users.

"MySpace is not falling off a cliff but, at the same time, they see gaming as a ladder to find their way into more people's lives and get back on the radar," said analyst Scott Steinberg, author of *Get Rich Playing Games*.

"Facebook has left them crowded out. At the edge of the spotlight is still out of the light."

MySpace unveiled a new games gallery at [myspace.com/games](http://myspace.com/games) and began automatically recommending games to new members along with song and friend suggestions based on profiles.

Jones promised game developers that the website will make it easier for their creations to spread "virally" by "very gently and slowly" modifying how friends share news of fun titles.

"I really want to make sure we solve the problems of 13 to 34 year-olds and a big part of that strategy is games," Jones told developers at GDC. "It will be easier for you to bring games over to MySpace."

The News Corp-owned social networking service also announced a Neon application that lets MySpace games be played on Apple's popular iPhone devices.

MySpace used feedback from developers to revamp its online gaming platform.

"We are impressed with MySpace's renewed commitment to deliver a great gaming experience to their users and our players," said Marianne Borenstein, a vice president at Playdom, a major maker of games for MySpace and Facebook.

The MySpace announcement came shortly after co-founders of the social networking service unveiled a partnership to acquire online gaming platform MindJolt.

Chris DeWolfe, Colin Digiario, and Aber Whitcomb said they will spread MindJolt to more websites and smartphones as well as work with game developers to create tools for online play.

MindJolt reported that more than 20 million people play each month on its platform, which features 1,300 "of the best casual games on the Web from developers worldwide."

"MindJolt has quickly become an "on-ramp" to the Internet for the world's independent game developers," said MindJolt chief executive DeWolfe.

"Our goal is to make it even easier for developers to get their games

noticed and make more money from their work."

MindJolt's executive team includes MySpace co-founder Whitcomb and other veterans of the social networking service that News Corp bought for 580 million dollars in 2005.

"We want absolutely to work with them," Jones said of MindJolt. "It is not a competition."

MySpace and other social networks are vying for pieces of a growing online gaming pie, according to Steinberg.

"People seem to be rediscovering in increasing numbers the pleasure of play," Steinberg said. "As people are waking up to the possibilities, so are social networks."

Social games are behind the scenes heroes at GDC, with seminars and panels coaching developers in ways to create, deliver, and make money off titles.

"Social gaming is basically propping up the whole industry at this point," Steinberg said.

"All the excitement is in social networks."

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