

Facebook seeks to spread its influence across the Internet

April 21 2010



Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg delivers the opening keynote address at the f8 Developer Conference in San Francisco, California. Zuckerberg kicked off the the one day conference for developers that features breakout sessions on the future of social technologies.

Facebook on Wednesday set out to spread its influence across the Internet by weaving its social networking service into all websites and making the Web revolve around its users.

Facebook rolled out a series of changes in what was pitched as an inevitable evolution in people's relationships, activities and interests melding in online identities that follow them wherever they roam on the Internet.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg outlined his vision of an "open

graph" after making a rock star entrance to cheers and applause at the California firm's third annual "f8" developers conference in San Francisco.

"Today, the Web exists as a series of unstructured links between pages," said Zuckerberg, whose social network boasts more than 400 million users around the globe. "The open graph puts people at the center of the Web."

He gave the example of a Facebook member visiting the CNN.com news website, clicking on a story and then seeing an inset box that tells them which of their friends liked the same piece.

Similarly, a Facebook user could go to Internet radio station Pandora or sports-focused ESPN online and automatically share musical tastes or game news with their pals in the world's leading online community.

"Pandora will be able to start playing music from bands you have liked all across the Web," Zuckerberg said.

"It can show you which friends like music similar to what you are listening to then you can click and listen to their collections."

Open graph basically lets any Web page be turned into a de facto Facebook page, he said.

Facebook vice president of engineering Mike Schroepfer said the move could turn websites throughout the Internet into digital age versions of "Cheers," a vintage US television comedy show set in a bar where everyone knows each other.

"It's like Cheers, the bar where everyone knows your name," Schroepfer told AFP. "Or the restaurant where the maitre d' knows your name and

that you like window tables. It is an inherently better experience."

Freshly launched tools let developers install Facebook's recently adopted "Like" icons that let people signal interests with a single click and share them automatically with friends at participating websites.

"We are going to make it possible to make those connections, then a lot of neat things become possible," Zuckerberg said. "People can have instantly social and personalized experiences everywhere they go."

Movie website IMDb and technology colossus Microsoft, which owns a minor stake in Facebook, were among some 70 websites that have been testing the new software and have it in place.

Facebook's move has the potential to put the service at the heart of increasingly personalized online experiences, and wrest traffic from other Internet firms vying for people's attention and advertising dollars.

Zuckerberg said Facebook has no plans to use the new developer tools to mine revenue but expects to benefit by strengthening bonds people have to the social networking service.

"The more people use Facebook the stronger the bond," Zuckerberg said.

"We serve ads and that is the business model that is working real well for us," he continued. "Other people are going to make a lot of money from this and that is really good."

While the social network's new tools have the potential to expand Facebook's presence throughout the Internet, it could mean people visit the firm's website less.

"How do we create a world where when we show up anywhere our friends are there?" Facebook vice president Chris Cox asked rhetorically. "Our answer is an open platform and to give these tools to developers."

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Citation: Facebook seeks to spread its influence across the Internet (2010, April 21) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-04-facebook-internet.html>

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