

Microsoft revamps online game service, more social

November 16 2010, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Microsoft Corp. is creating a new online games hub and making it more social by linking it to players' Facebook and Windows Live accounts.

The new hub integrates the company's so-called "casual game" properties, MSN Games, Windows Live Messenger and games on its search engine Bing, so that people can challenge one another to simple but addictive games such as "Bejeweled" and "Plants vs. Zombies," regardless of which of the sites they play on.

Microsoft's [Xbox Live](#) online games service already has found success with an entirely different breed of games - the likes of "Halo" and "Call of Duty."

With the new hub, announced Monday, players can log in with their Facebook or Windows Live accounts, invite friends to play or challenge them to a round of bridge. They can also post about their achievements in [status updates](#) and check out online "leaderboards" of the highest-scoring players.

Microsoft is injecting a social flavor into this games service at a time when social games on [Facebook](#) are enjoying enormous popularity, with more than 200 million of the social hub's 500 million active users clicking away on games such as "FarmVille" and "Cafe World" each month.

Microsoft also said on Monday that Kinect, its controller-free [motion sensor](#) that lets players use [hand gestures](#) and their voice to play Xbox games, sold 1 million units in 10 days. The company expects to sell 5 million of them by the end of the year.

More information: <http://games.msn.com>

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