

MySpace deepens ties with rival Facebook

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A MySpace party at Comic-Con in July 2010. MySpace on Thursday began letting members tap into entertainment preferences expressed in Facebook profiles in a deepening of ties with the firm that snatched its social networking crown.

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A "Mashup with Facebook" feature being rolled out globally lets MySpace users click on a "Connect" icon to customize profiles at the News Corp.-owned social network with likes and interests shared at Facebook.

"We are thrilled to further our collaboration with Facebook," said MySpace chief executive Mike Jones. "This new feature is a great illustration of our strategy around social entertainment and enabling the

real-time stream."

MySpace is among more than a million websites letting Facebook members extend their "social graph" at the world's top social networking community to other parts of the Internet.

"Sharing entertainment and music interests is part of many of our friendships, online and off," said Facebook vice president of partnerships Dan Rose.

"MySpace is giving people an easy way to bring their favorite bands, celebrities and movies from Facebook to create a personalized experience on MySpace from the start."

Some saw the MySpace move as an admission that Facebook rules the realm of online social networking.

"MySpace is very committed to this new strategy of social entertainment," Jones replied when asked by AFP whether Mashup constituted surrender in its rivalry with Facebook. "We think of it as complementary with Facebook."

He and Rose said there is no financial component to the Mashup.

Mashup, a technology world term that refers to merging different software programs to create something new, builds on a Sync with Facebook feature launched a month ago.

More than a million MySpace members have adopted Sync, which enables the syncing of MySpace status updates with Facebook pages.

Jones said MySpace pages will soon be sporting "Like" buttons that members will be able to click on to share entertainment preferences with

friends on Facebook.

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. put MySpace on notice early this month, saying the losses at the ailing social network were unsustainable and there needs to be improvement in the next few quarters.

"We've been clear that MySpace is a problem," News Corp. president and chief operating officer Chase Carey said during a conference call with analysts after the media and entertainment giant released its quarterly earnings.

"The current losses are not acceptable or sustainable," Carey said. "Our current management did not create these losses but they know we have to address them."

News Corp. bought MySpace for 580 million dollars in 2005 but it has been eclipsed by Facebook in recent years, which has grown to more than 500 million members while MySpace's numbers have dwindled.

With tens of millions of users, Carey said MySpace still "has the potential to be an exciting business for us" but "we need to make real headway in the coming quarters to get this business to a sustainable level."

MySpace underwent a major redesign in October intended to make it an online hotspot for the "Generation Y" younger generation.

Facebook's share of advertising money spent at online social networks grew to 50 percent this year from 36 percent last year while MySpace's share shrank from 32 percent to 19 percent, according to industry tracker eMarketer.

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