Gowalla app syncs with Foursquare and Facebook

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A South Korean customer looks at the Apple iPhone 4 at a shop in Seoul. Gowalla has rolled out a redesign that included letting members of the location-based social network share "check-ins" at Foursquare, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook Places.

Gowalla on Thursday rolled out a redesign that included letting members of the location-based social network share "check-ins" at Foursquare, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook Places.

The release of Gowalla 3 software, initially only available for iPhones, comes with the soaring popularity of services that let people use smartphones to let friends know where they are and what they are doing.

Versions of the Gowalla application crafted for iPad tablet computers

along with [Blackberry](#), [Android](#) and other smartphones will be released in January.

"People love Gowalla but want to keep up with friends on [Facebook](#) and Foursquare," Gowalla co-founder Josh Williams said while giving AFP a preview of the new software.

"We are basically connecting all these disparate services to make it easy to share check-ins."

New Gowalla features include being able to leave "notes" that friends receive only after checking in at a spot.

For example, one might check in at a restaurant to find a note from a friend recommending a dish or dessert. A loved one traveling abroad could find a note waiting for them at a foreign airport.

"I'm pumped about that," Williams said of the note feature. "We don't know what's going to happen when we unleash it into the wild."

The potential exists for it to evolve into being able to leave a gift card that a friend could redeem after checking in at a business, or let operators of establishments have deals waiting in messages for Gowalla users.

Gowalla has attracted more than 600,000 users since a raw version of the service launched in early 2009 at a South by Southwest (SXSW) conference in the Texas city of Austin, where the Internet firm is located.

About 45 percent of Gowalla use is outside the United States, with much of that in Europe.

"We launched a little over a year and a half ago and it has been a whirlwind ever since," Williams said.

"Foursquare went the gaming route. Facebook went with deals and coupons. Ours is a memory book and a guidebook mentality."

Friends at Gowalla share pictures and comments from places they visit, earning creatively designed "passport stamps" along the way as souvenirs of adventures.

Last month, the Walt Disney Co. teamed with Gowalla to let people create virtual scrapbooks by "checking-in" at various spots throughout the entertainment giant's theme parks.

Gowalla has also collaborated with US car maker Chevrolet, telecom titan AT&T and Toms Shoes.

Gowalla takes in "meaningful" revenue but has yet to make a profit, its co-founder said.

While Foursquare is a powerful contender and Facebook has the advantage of having more than 500 million members, it is too early to say how matters will play out in the location-based services arena, according to Williams.

"No one knows where it is going to now," Williams said. "No one can lay claim to being the chosen leader. There is talk of one check-in to rule them all, but we haven't seen it yet."

The market is definitely going to grow with the booming popularity of smartphones that can signal their locations using satellites or telecom tower triangulation, according to Williams.

A "Deals" feature unveiled by Facebook last month promised to resonate with users and businesses by tapping into location-sensing features of mobile phones to connect people with bargains at local shops, restaurants or bars.

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