

Google on a hiring high

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The Internet giant added more than 4,500 "Googlers" to its employee ranks in 2010 and plans to easily eclipse that figure this year, Google senior vice president of engineering and research Alan Eustace said in a blog post.

"It will be our biggest hiring year in company history," he said. "We'll hire as many smart, creative people as we can to tackle some of the toughest challenges in computer science."

Google's top hiring year to date was 2007, when the company added 6,000 employees, according to Eustace.

Information about jobs at Google was available online at google.com/jobs.

The list of Google projects set to challenge new workers included building a Web-based computer operating system, instantly searching more than 100 million gigabytes of data, and "even developing cars that drive themselves."

"Google is still the same entrepreneurial company it was when I started, encouraging Googlers to take on big ideas," Eustace said, noting that he was hired eight years ago when the firm had barely 500 employees.

Word of the Google hiring blitz and talk of maintaining a startup spark came as co-founder Larry Page prepared to return to the company's helm in April.

While more profitable than ever -- with nearly \$30 billion in revenue last year -- Google is under pressure from new rivals such as Facebook and Twitter for the attention of Web surfers, advertising dollars and engineering talent.

In naming Page, 37, to be chief executive, analysts said Google is seeking to return to its startup roots and ensure its place amid a constantly evolving Internet landscape.

Outgoing CEO Eric Schmidt, 55, was brought in to run Google in 2001, when it was battling other, now defunct search engines, while Page and fellow co-founder Sergey Brin were just a few years removed from Stanford University.

Schmidt is widely credited with helping build the company into the technology titan it is today alongside the likes of Apple and Microsoft.

While Schmidt is expected to remain an influential voice at Google as executive chairman, the Mountain View, California-based company is turning to Page to stay ahead of its competitors over the next decade.

Danny Sullivan, editor-in-chief of technology blog SearchEngineLand.com, said Google's biggest challenges now are to "prove that they've got their Mojo back and that nobody needs to fear them."

"You have investors and others saying 'Gosh, Facebook seems to be doing so well. Why aren't you the hot new thing?'" Sullivan said.

In a conference call with financial analysts after the announcement that Page would replace Schmidt, co-founder Brin indicated the company would be putting more effort into the social arena.

"We've touched just one percent of the capabilities that could be deployed in that realm," said Brin, who will be in charge of strategic projects and new products in the revamped management structure.

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