

Check in lately? Foursquare revamps its app

March 8 2011, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Foursquare, the smart phone service that lets you "check in" to restaurants, bars and wherever else you want to tell friends you're at, is trying to help you discover new places.

A new version of its application will include a new button, "explore," which replaces the current "tips" section.

[Foursquare](#) co-founder Dennis Crowley said the idea is to find things near you, including the unexpected. So Foursquare might recommend a new burrito joint based on your check-in history, or on what your friends like. A new search function, meanwhile, lets you type in keywords such as "margaritas outside" or "date night" and get suggestions for where to go.

The update, available for iPhones and [Android](#) phones Wednesday, will also let businesses offer new types of incentives, or "specials."

Businesses can already offer deals or discounts to loyal customers or new visitors. For example, a bar can offer its "mayor" - that is, the person who has checked in the most times - happy-hour prices at all times, a free appetizer or a drink special.

The update brings three new types of specials, bringing the total to seven. "Swarm specials" will let places offer special deals if a ton of people - say, 50 or 500 - check in all at once. "Flash specials" are quick-hit deals - such a free drink to the first 10 people to show up at a restaurant at a certain time. "Friends specials" are just that, deals you get

when you bring a few extra guests to a venue.

Foursquare has also revamped its leaderboard, which lets users compete with one another by scoring points for check-ins. The current [app](#) has one, but it wasn't easily found and many people simply forgot about it.

The new leaderboard is displayed prominently on your Foursquare profile. Besides competing with friends, it lets you compete against your own high score. The goal is to reward you for checking in, even if you have little chance of becoming the "mayor" of your corner coffee shop. So now you'll get points for all kinds of activities, such as trying out new types of restaurants or visiting a place with a group of friends.

Two-year-old Foursquare has nearly 7.5 million users worldwide and adds about 35,000 new people each day. This has made it more difficult for users, especially those in densely populated areas, to reach the coveted "mayor" title.

More information: Online: <http://blog.foursquare.com>

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