

Google pulls plug on Fast Flip, Aardvark

September 3 2011, by Chris Lefkow



Internet giant Google said that it is pulling the plug on its online news reader Fast Flip and closing Aardvark, a "social search" service it bought last year.

Google said Friday it is pulling the plug on online news reader Fast Flip, social search service Aardvark, commenting tool Sidewiki and several other products.

"Over the next few months we'll be shutting down a number of products and merging others into existing products as features," [senior vice president](#) Alan Eustace said in a move he called a "fall spring-clean" at the Internet giant.

Eustace said the closures will allow the Mountain View, California-based company to "devote more resources to high impact products -- the ones that improve the lives of billions of people."

"Technology improves, people's needs change, some bets pay off and

others don't," he said in a blog post.

Google said it is discontinuing the products as part of the closure announced last month of its [experimental test](#) bed Google Labs.

Besides Fast Flip, Aardvark and Sidewiki, other products facing the ax include Google Desktop, Google Web Security, Image Labeler, Notebook and Subscribed Links.

Sidewiki allows notes and comments to be posted alongside Web pages for others to read.

Google said it will begin removing Fast Flip, which was unveiled in September 2009, from Google News in the coming days.

"For the past two years, the Fast Flip experiment has fueled a new approach to faster, richer content display on the Web -- which will live on in our other display and delivery tools," Google said.

"We want to thank the dozens of participating US publishers for their collaboration with us in pioneering news content browsing and reading experiences for the Web and mobile devices," it said.

Google's media partners on Fast Flip include The New York Times, the BBC, The [Huffington Post](#), The Los Angeles Times, The Christian Science Monitor, The [Wall Street Journal](#) and other publications.

Other companies supplying content include magazines such as the Atlantic, Cosmopolitan, Elle, Marie Claire and Popular Mechanics, as well as online news sites TechCrunch, Salon and Slate.

Fast Flip allows users to browse through news stories from Google's media partners at speeds significantly faster than the time it usually takes

to load a Web page.

Aardvark co-founders Max Ventilla and Damon Horowitz said in a blog post entitled "Goodbye Aardvark" that the service will shut down at the end of September.

Google acquired Aardvark, which was founded in 2007, in February of last year for a purchase price put at \$50 million by technology blog TechCrunch.

Aardvark uses the contacts in a person's network to provide answers to questions via the Web at Vark.com, instant messaging, email or Twitter.

"Aardvark began as a small experiment in a new kind of [social search](#), and over a few years blossomed into a service that made millions of connections between people to answer each other's questions," Ventilla and Horowitz said.

"Over this time, we learned a lot about creating and maintaining online communities, and how to facilitate sharing of knowledge between people," they said. "We've been excited to share these lessons within Google over the past year, especially as part of the effort behind Google+"

Google+ is the social network launched by the [Internet giant](#) in June.

Ventilla and Horowitz said the Aardvark team "remains committed to developing powerful tools for connecting people and improving access to information."

The announcement of the closure of the slate of products comes a week after [Google](#) said it was shutting down Slide, a developer of applications for social networks it bought a year ago.

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