

Google+ slow and sure in challenge to Facebook

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The sign-in page of social networking site Google+. The California Internet titan's popular products and services will increasingly be woven into its nascent but fast-growing Google+ social network to make joining irresistible, executives said.

Google remains undaunted in its bid to create a flourishing online community that can go toe-to-toe with social networking powerhouse Facebook.

The California Internet titan's popular products and services will increasingly be woven into its nascent but fast-growing [Google+](#) social network to make joining irresistible, executives said Thursday.

"We are in an enviable position that we have people who come to Google," Vic Gundotra, [vice president](#) in charge of Google+, said at a

Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco.

"We are in this for the long haul... By Christmas you will see Google+ strategy coming together."

Google+ has attracted more than 40 million users since it opened to the public about a month ago, but has a long way to catch up with Facebook's membership of approximately 800 million.

In the coming days, programs offered as online services at Google Apps will work with Google+ accounts, which will eventually synch with other popular offerings such as YouTube.

Google plans to eventually open its [social networking](#) platform to outside developers to make games and other kinds of installable "apps" that have been part of Facebook's success, according to Gundotra.

Google+ will also eventually allow people to use pseudonyms on accounts instead of their real names, he said, touching on one of the criticisms of the social network.

Google is moving slowly and cautiously to make sure its social network is a safe, stable haven for families, friends, and other associates who connect with one another in "circles" created at the service.

Gundotra acknowledged that Facebook has the advantage of a "network affect," in that complex webs of friends are established there and people might find it daunting to up and relocate to Google+.

"The incumbent has a huge advantage," Gundotra said. "If you play the same game, you are not going to win... So we are going to do it differently."

Differently, for Google+, includes giving users more discretion regarding what they share and with whom.

"We do not believe in over-sharing," Gundotra said.

"There is a reason why every thought in your head does not come out your mouth... We think a core attribute to being human is to curate."

Google+ launched with a requirement that people use their real names online in order to let others find them more easily, according to executives.

"We wanted this to be a product where you can discover people you know," Gundotra said. "You don't know 'Captain Crunch' or 'Dog Fart'."

Google co-founder Sergey Brin said that he initially thought Google+ was too complicated, but has come to like the online community that lets users create "circles" of contacts depending on intimacy.

"I have connected with friends who I haven't touched base with in a while," Brin said at the summit.

"I wasn't able to do that with existing services because of the way the sharing models worked," he said in an indirect reference to social networking king [Facebook](#). "It just didn't work for me."

Brin said that Google has been streamlining its product line and merging offerings under the leadership of fellow co-founder Larry Page, who replaced Eric Schmidt as chief executive earlier this year.

"I completely agree that some of our products and services seemed scattered over the past few years, and we definitely have been trying to bring them together," Brin said.

"In some ways, we have always run the company as 'let a thousand flowers bloom,' but once they do bloom, you want to put together a coherent bouquet."

Brin added that he was happy in his new role working on special projects, such as Google's self-driving car, and getting to be the "peanut gallery" when Page is grappling with executive decisions.

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