

Facebook co-founder unveils Asana productivity software

November 3 2011, By Jessica Guynn, Los Angeles Times

Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz unveiled his highly anticipated new company, a developer of software that aims to help people work more efficiently.

Asana is a task manager that enables teams of people to manage their work flow by breaking projects into tasks. The Web-based [software](#) gives workers one central place where they can see what colleagues are doing and get updates on how a project is progressing, Moskovitz said.

Moskovitz, at 27 the world's youngest [billionaire](#) according to Forbes, and Asana co-founder Justin Rosenstein, a former colleague from [Facebook](#), said they think of it as the modern way of working.

Moskovitz, a self-taught programmer, and former roommate [Mark Zuckerberg](#) dropped out of Harvard to build Facebook into the world's most popular social network.

As the company grew, Moskovitz, Facebook's vice president of engineering at the time, found himself spending more time than expected trying to stay on top of managing hundreds of new employees. He shared his frustrations with Rosenstein, a gifted programmer who was intrigued with figuring out better ways for teams to collaborate. While at Facebook, Moskovitz created productivity tools, all of which Facebook still uses today.

In 2008, Moskovitz and Rosenstein struck out on their own to build [work](#)

[productivity](#) and collaboration tools for companies, nonprofits, artistic endeavors, anyone who needed them.

"At some point we realized that this was not just a problem for Facebook and [tech startups](#). This was a problem that was fundamental to all [human behavior](#): how to keep everyone on the same page," Rosenstein said in an interview this week. "There is rich information squirreled away in people's heads and their inboxes. There is nowhere to go to see what people are working on now, what people have done recently and how far a project is from the finish line."

But Asana's founders say they are not creating Facebook for business.

"Facebook is social software that puts people at the center of the graph. Asana puts work at the center of the graph," Rosenstein said.

It's an ambitious gambit for a young start-up. Moskovitz and Rosenstein are newcomers to the competitive field of selling [business software](#). Asana is going after the lucrative businesses of technology giants such as Microsoft that have been making productivity and collaboration software for years. Google has also made inroads in business software with Google Docs. Other upstart rivals include Salesforce.com, Yammer and Jive, which have sprung up more recently.

Asana, which has 19 employees in San Francisco's Mission District and has raised \$10.2 million from investors including Benchmark Capital and Andreessen Horowitz, has been beta-testing the software since last year with thousands of users at hundreds of companies. One of those companies is the sports and entertainment talent agency Wasserman Media Group, which uses it to organize its executive team.

Asana is taking an unconventional approach to promoting its business software. Usually, a company's top information technology manager

buys productivity software. Asana is giving away its software free to groups of up to 30 people in hopes that once employees become enamored with the software, they will persuade their companies to buy a paid version with more features that Asana plans to release later.

So how does the experience of building Asana compare to Facebook?

"Certainly we think this is one of the very key things we could be doing in software," Moskovitz said. "We think it will be as impactful on the world as Facebook was."

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