

Social network Path runs with Nike

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Nike+ FuelBands are displayed in January 2012. Intimate social network Path has kept its stride after a privacy stumble and on Friday began running with Nike.

Intimate social network Path has kept its stride after a privacy stumble and on Friday began running with Nike.

Path announced that users could keep family and close friends posted on runs in real-time with data fed to smartphones from Nike+ GPS sensors in some brands of the athletic footwear star's shoes.

"Running is just the start," the San Francisco-based Path said in a release. "Nike is pioneering an entirely new way to integrate activity and sport in your everyday life."

Nike+ data from each run is turned into a Path "story" complete with the

route shown on a map and photos of those who virtually "cheered you along" with feedback at the social network.

In coming weeks, Path will be synched to wirelessly link to new Nike+ FuelBand bracelets that track a wearer's activity through the day.

Friends and family members at Path will be kept posted about what FuelBand users are doing to hit calorie-burning goals.

"Sharing your daily activity can be very motivation for people," Path co-founder Dave Morin told AFP while discussing the Nike alliance in a recent interview.

"The people who support you the most in workouts are generally your family and friends."

Path also added the capability to record and recognize tunes being heard to share them at the social network and beefed up tools for working with photos.

Path has grown to more than two million members since it was launched in November 2010 by Morin, Dustin Mierau, and Napster creator Shawn Fanning. About 1.2 million of those members use Path monthly.

Morin was a key engineer at social networking success story Facebook for about four years before leaving for Path.

Path's backers include actor Ashton Kutcher, Salesforce.com chief executive Marc Benioff, and Silicon Valley venture capital titan Ron Conway.

Path is based on psycho-social research indicating that individuals can't effectively manage more than 150 personal relationships.

The social network lets people use smartphones to stay in tune with no more than 150 family members and close friends who happen to be sharing their "path" at any given point in life.

"We want you to connect with fewer people, not more," Morin said, noting that Path pages don't boast of how many friends users have.

"We think that creates a more trusted environment for you to share whatever you want," he said. "It turns out that five or so is the number of really best friends you can have and there are about 20 people you trust."

Morin said that Path continued to gain users at a steady rate despite being slammed last month for a "friend finder" feature that uploaded users' address book information without asking for permission.

Path quickly apologized and released applications modified to ask users whether they would like the service to use personal contact list information to help them connect with friends or family at the social network.

"We made an assumption that it was okay based on common practice in the industry and we were obviously wrong," Morin said of automatically dipping into contact books to connect users' with friends.

"It was a standard way a lot of people are doing this; that doesn't make it right."

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