Google to talk tablets, TV, social and more

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The range of sessions at the annual Google I/O, geek-speak abbreviation for Input/Output, gathering of software developers that kicks off

Wednesday will be as wide as the company's array of products and services.

But the objective behind the workshops, talks, and parties will be to assure software savants that it is worth devoting time and energy to "apps" that shine on stages such as Android, Chrome, YouTube, Google TV and Google+ social network.

"What is going on is a battle for hearts and minds, both of consumers buying the devices running on these platforms and of developers who create the apps that have so much allure to people," said Forrester analyst Charles Golvin.

"Getting the energy of this community is critical," the analyst said of rivals such as Google, Apple and Microsoft wooing independent software developers.

"Now, it is not so much a numbers game regarding who has more apps as it is a uniqueness game to see who can come up with the next breakout -- like a Draw Something or Words With Friends -- that the other guy doesn't have."

Words With Friends was a Zynga game that became a hit at leading social network Facebook. Draw Something is a smartphone game that rocketed to success after debuting on Apple's iPhones.

Google is under pressure to unify Android operating software for smartphones and tablets that has suffered from "fragmentation" as competing gadget makers put individual spins on the free software.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that Google will pull back the curtain on a seven-inch (18-centimeter) tablet made by Taiwan-based Asus and bearing the California Internet titan's Nexus brand name. This tablet may be a response to Microsoft's decision to release a Surface tablet computer, pictured on June 18, powered by new Windows 8 software.

While developers can write applications that will work across all Apple devices, mini-programs typically need to be adapted to various modified Android operating systems.

Apple held its annual Worldwide Developers Conference two weeks ago in the same San Francisco venue as the one where Google I/O will play out.

"Just like with Apple trying to convince developers that it has a larger environment and audience on its platform, Google is doing the same thing with Android, Chrome, Chrome OS and Google TV," Golvin said.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that Google will pull back the curtain on a seven-inch (18-centimeter) tablet made by Taiwan-based Asus and bearing the California Internet titan's Nexus brand name.

The tablet was expected to be powered by a new generation Android operating system called "Jelly Bean" and have a starting price of $199 to take on popular Kindle Fire electronic readers made by Amazon.com.

"Seven-inch has been a favorite with readers," said Silicon Valley analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group.

"Amazon has a new Kindle due out and Google might want to position something against it."

A TV displays Google TV on its screen in January 2012. Google will have sessions at its I/O gathering devoted to its social network and its Google TV platform for streaming Internet content to home entertainment centers.

Enderle saw a Nexus tablet also as a response to Microsoft's decision to release a Surface [tablet computer](#) powered by new Windows 8 software.

As Google did with its Nexus smartphone, it could be creating a tablet to demonstrate slick capabilities in Android and hope that device makers rise to the challenge.

Google has sessions at I/O devoted to its social network and its Google TV platform for streaming Internet content to home entertainment centers.

"The social arena against Facebook has been an ongoing struggle for Google and it will be interesting to see whether they are going to actually move the ball forward," said Gartner analyst Ray Valdes.

A bright point for Google will be programs such as email, text, or spreadsheet provided to businesses as services in the Internet "cloud," according to Valdes.

"There seems to be momentum there and I would look to see how they plan to accelerate that," the analyst said.

Google will offer sessions devoted to what is new with its online mapping service and how developers can take advantage of it to offer location or navigation-based services in applications.

"Google is about multiple venues for developers to tap into users," Valdes said. "Android is the primary focus of Google I/O but there are lots of other pieces."

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