

Facebook CEO: Stock 'obviously been disappointing'

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In this Jan. 3, 2011 file photo, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg smiles in San Francisco. Facebook Inc. CEO Mark Zuckerberg is speaking at a technology conference in San Francisco on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2012, It is his first interview since the company's rocky initial public offering earlier this year. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)

(AP)—Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Tuesday that the performance of his company's stock since its public offering "has obviously been disappointing," but he said the company has survived troubles before.

His comments came in his first interview since the rocky offering in May. Facebook's stock has lost half its value after one of the most anticipated stock offerings in history. The IPO priced at \$38, but shares soon fell sharply.

The stock closed up 62 cents, or 3.3 percent, to \$19.43 Tuesday. After Zuckerberg began speaking at the at the San Francisco Disrupt conference, the stock rose to \$20.17 in after-hours trading.

Speaking in front of a standing-room-only audience, he told TechCrunch founder Michael Arrington that the pressure over the stock offering is "not like the first up and down we've ever had."

The social networking site has nearly a billion users and counting. But the company's challenge is how to make money from it, especially as mobile devices offer less room to display ads.

"There are tons of people super-pessimistic," Zuckerberg said. But he added, "I would personally rather be underestimated. It gives us latitude to go out and make some big bets."

Zuckerberg likes to bring up Facebook's core mission—making the world more "open and connected." But investors want to know how Facebook will be a lasting business and how the company, created in 2004 with desktop computers in mind, will become a true mobile-first pioneer.

Zuckerberg made it clear that Facebook wants to make money and will do that by figuring out mobile.

He said "one of the main things misunderstood right now is how fundamentally good it is."

Zuckerberg said he couldn't get into the specifics of the company's many long-term projects, and he didn't have "anything specific to announce." When asked how many engineers Facebook now has, he said he didn't know offhand.

The 28-year-old CEO controls more than half of the voting stock in Facebook, and the company recently put some investors more at ease when it said in a regulatory filing that he does not plan to sell any shares in the company for at least the next 12 months.

Investors are worried about post-IPO "lock-up" expirations that allow early investors and insiders to sell their shares.

In his letter to shareholders ahead of Facebook's IPO, Zuckerberg had stressed that "Facebook was not originally created to be a company."

On Tuesday, he said, "Ten or 20 years from now, the legacy of this company should be, we connected everyone in the world, and they're able to share whatever they want."

Among other things, Facebook has repeatedly faced criticism and user rebellion over its policies and practices affecting data privacy.

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