

AOL wants to organize your email clutter with Alto (Update)

October 18 2012, by Barbara Ortutay



This screenshot shows a preview for Alto, AOL Inc. launched Alto on Thursday, Oct. 18, 2012, not as a new email service, but rather, Alto works in concert with other email accounts to clean out and organize messages, social network notifications, daily deals, photos and email attachments. The service is available for free by invitation to users in a closed "beta" test. (AP Photo/Alto)

(AP)—The Internet icon that bought email to the masses with its classic "You've got mail" slogan now wants to help people organize the flood of

messages in their Gmail, Yahoo mail and other accounts.

AOL Inc. launched Alto on Thursday. It's not a new email service. Rather, Alto works in concert with other email accounts to clean out and organize messages, social network notifications, daily deals, photos and email attachments. The service is available for free by invitation to users in a closed "beta" test.

Users can set up Alto so that mass-emails, such as those from retailers or daily deals sites, skip their inbox entirely and show up only in Alto. Instead of a text-based list that people are used to in email, Alto uses what it calls "stacks." These take up most of the application's main page. You can use Alto's existing stacks such as "daily deals," "social notifications," "retailers" or "photos." Or, you can create your own stacks—for messages from family members, newsletters you subscribe to or event invitations, for example.

Alto also lets users "snooze" certain emails, which can be useful for bill pay notifications or invites.

One downside—Alto is not compatible with Microsoft's email services.

AOL said the goal of Alto is to make email less stressful, harkening back to the days when "You've got mail" made people excited. Excited is not the first emotion that comes to mind for most email users today when a message arrives in one of their inboxes.

Alto was developed in New York-based AOL's Silicon Valley offices in Palo Alto, California. The company's email service is No. 4 in the U.S., behind Yahoo, Google Inc.'s Gmail and Microsoft.

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