

Airbnb remodels online home

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Online lodgings listings service Airbnb on Wednesday took the wraps off a major remodel of its online home complete with a new logo.

"Airbnb has outgrown the original Airbnb brand," startup co-founder and chief Brian Chesky said in a post at the website.

"What started as a way for a few friends to pay the rent has now transformed into something bigger and more meaningful than we ever imagined."

The website lets people take in house guests who pay for stays in a variation of a "collective consumption" theme that taps into the power of the Internet to let folks share the benefits and costs of possessions such as cars and homes.

"Like us, you may have started out thinking you were just renting out a room to help pay the bills,' Chesky said in a message aimed at Airbnb users.

"Or maybe you were just booking a bed for a night on an unexpected layover. However we first entered this community, we all know that getting in isn't a transaction. It's a connection that can last a lifetime."

Chesky said that changes to Airbnb website were intended to reflect those in its community and the notion that the service lets travelers find places where they can feel as though they belong.

"We have redesigned every single page of the user experience across the web and mobile to bring our new identity to life," Chesky said.

Changes included an improved "Discover" section to spotlight desirable nearby locales where Airbnb users can find lodging, and making it easier to explore listings and make reservations.

Airbnb has come under scrutiny in some US cities due to concerns that some people use the service to run what amount to illegal hotels.

The San Francisco-based startup was launched in 2008 and quickly became very popular.

Traditional hotel chains see it as a rival and accuse it of helping people avoid taxes and hosting illegal hotels on its website.

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