

Microsoft moves MSN team into Windows development group

March 17 2015, by Matt Day, The Seattle Times

Microsoft is folding its MSN team into the Windows division, a shakeup announced months ahead of the expected release of Windows 10, the latest version of the operating system.

The move is the latest retooling of Microsoft's structure during Satya Nadella's 14 months of leading the company. Under the changes, which Nadella announced Friday in a memo, MSN will move to the Windows group led by Terry Myerson from the Applications and Services division headed by Qi Lu.

Myerson, 42, has taken on a growing slate of responsibilities in the past few years. He has led the operating systems group since its creation in 2013 as part of a sweeping reorganization under then-CEO Steve Ballmer.

In addition to the development of Windows across PCs and mobile devices, Myerson also oversees the Internet Explorer Web browser and the software side of Xbox. He previously led the development of the Windows Phone mobile operating system.

Myerson's team is deep into the development of Windows 10, set for release later this year on a date yet to be announced. Microsoft executives hope the operating system will make it easier for both consumers and developers to bridge the gap between smartphones, tablets and laptops, and extend Microsoft's reach beyond its traditional domain of personal computers.

MSN's former home, Applications and Services, includes much of the company's Web-facing products. Qi Lu, the former Yahoo executive who leads the unit, oversees the Bing search engine, Skype chat service and online advertising, as well as development of the Office productivity suite.

A Microsoft spokesperson confirmed MSN's move, which was first reported in GeekWire, but declined to comment on how many employees would be affected.

Launched in 1995, MSN has gone through a series of reinventions as Microsoft changed its approach to the Internet.

The service, originally dubbed Microsoft Network, began as a paid, proprietary online network, and was later retooled as a more-open Internet service provider to compete with the likes of AOL. For much of the 2000s, MSN served primarily as a Web portal and default Internet home page for the millions of PCs sold each year, offering original content and links to news, weather and email.

Microsoft has spent the past couple of years rolling back MSN's production of original news content, cutting its workforce in 2013 and 2014. A redesigned MSN was launched in September, with executives touting the site's partnerships with other news providers.

Business Insider reported last year that the redesign sparked renewed debate within Microsoft about the company's priorities on the Web. Executives disagreed about whether Internet Explorer's default landing page should tout Windows 10, and whether links in the MSN Web portal should point users to Bing search results or news articles, the news site reported.

A Microsoft spokesperson declined to comment on the report.

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