

Ning launches social network tools for any website

October 13 2010, by Glenn Chapman



Social networking website developer Ning is hoping it can generate momentum with the release of a new set of tools that lets even technophobes build websites that create online communities and tap into smartphone applications and software.

Bands, politicians, charities and more are turning to Ning to imbue websites with the kinds of social networking features credited with making stars out of Facebook and Twitter.

Ning hopes to create momentum with the Wednesday release of new tools that let even technophobes build websites that create online communities and tap into smartphone applications and software hosted in the Internet "cloud".

"We focus on network creators who are the people running the

campaign; the band, the non-profit raising money or connecting fans or supporters," Ning chief executive Jason Rosenthal told AFP on Tuesday.

"It used to be you'd have to hire a whole army of developers, but on Ning it is a drag-and-drop creation process so even someone with no technology skills can get all the features we expect to in a social experience online."

Ning has grown from 15,000 to 70,000 paid subscribers since it eliminated ad-supported services and slashed staff early this year.

Serial technology entrepreneur Marc Andreessen co-founded Ning with Gina Bianchini in 2004. She left Ning shortly before the startup's workforce was reduced.

Andreessen is known for founding such company's as Netscape and is a member of the Facebook board of directors.

Ning claimed to be the largest platform to let people create websites complete with blogs, forums, photos, videos and other increasingly standard components of online communities.

Monthly subscriptions range from three dollars (US) to 50 dollars.

Ning on Wednesday was extending its platform to smartphones and an array of cloud services, including being able to integrate websites with Facebook or Twitter.

Ning Everywhere sets a stage for applications on iPhone, BlackBerry, and Android smartphones to access the social features from websites.

Everywhere also enables software "extensions" customized applications that allow activities such as photo editing, location-based mapping, or

social games to be played out on smartphones as well as at websites, according to Rosenthal.

"Not only does every business, group, and brand need a website but every website is becoming social thanks in part to the great success of Facebook, Twitter, and others," Rosenthal said.

"What people do on Ning is create a social site to give themselves a digital hub around whatever they are doing... If you are a candidate it is a campaign; if you are a band like Linkin Park it is around your fans."

Leading social network [Facebook](#) and hot microblogging service [Twitter](#) have raised people's expectations regarding community features at websites, according to the chief executive.

"We are making it possible for every website from the largest brands to individuals to have a Facebook-quality experience around the topic they care about," Rosenthal said.

"Ning is about letting you create your own powerful social site -- you own it, you organize it, you monetize it."

The 15 launch partners for Ning Everywhere included Seesmic, CafePress, Mobile Roadie, Heyzap, and Constant Contact.

"I'm thrilled to have this partnership with Ning," Seesmic founder and chief executive Loic Le Meur said at Ning Everywhere launch event late Tuesday in San Francisco. "The platform is awesome."

Ning moved into Facebook's former offices in downtown Palo Alto after the [social networking](#) star moved to a larger space elsewhere in that northern California city.

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