

New social network gives a penny for your thoughts

16 July 2014, by Rob Lever



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Bubblews, which is launching a new platform Wednesday, aims to bring together people by giving a small slice of ad revenues to users for each time they post or share.

Founders Arvind Dixit and Jason Zuccari say bubblews.com will deliver advertising related to the content posted on the site—but contend that they are up front about this business model.

"We're a business so we will have to monetize this, but we are willing to compensate you for your social interactions," Dixit told AFP.

While other social networks promote themselves as a free place to mingle and share, they end up making money in "intrusive ways," such as tracking users' browsing histories, said Dixit.

Dixit and Zuccari said Bubblews will not "mine"

data from users' browsing history through files known as "cookies." Instead, it will glean information from the postings themselves, which will have a minimum of 400 characters.

"Because people are writing at least 400 characters, through the posts we can understand their personality," Dixit said.

"Now each person becomes an identity, not a cookie, or something you spy on."

The name merges the word "bubble" to symbolize one's thinking and "news," the founders say.

The first version of Bubblews launched in 2012 in beta or test mode, and the founders say it drew tens of thousands of people posting and as many as 20 million visitors from around the world.

The company raised \$3 million in venture capital and is launching a newly designed platform this week.

All posts on Bubblews are public, and anyone may follow a topic tagged with a plus sign.

This leads to more transparency and enables users without large groups of friends or followers to participate in conversations on topics ranging from the World Cup to world peace.



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The site operates in English only, but other languages are in the works. Dixit and Zuccari said about half of those using the beta site are in the United States, with significant participation from Canada, Britain, India, the Philippines and Brazil.

A Harris survey of US Internet [users](#) commissioned by the company found 62 percent of respondents are willing to try a new social media website.

'Pouring their hearts out'

Forty percent said they would try a new social media website if the content was relevant to them and one in four said they would do so if they were paid.

While the site will offer payouts, users are unlikely to get rich. People may earn about one cent per [social interaction](#) and can cash out when they have \$50 in credits.

The site has won a fan in Silicon Valley analyst and blogger Rob Enderle, who says it is a good concept.

"If people were only coming for the money people would ask for payment, and they're not doing that," Zuccari said. "People are really pouring their hearts out."

"I'd like to see this countertrend," Enderle told AFP. "If people who are now writing for free start gravitating toward sites that are paying them, that will change the model."

He added that many users are not merely interested in cashing in: "We have single mothers using Bubblews to purchase their children birthday gifts, college kids buying textbooks and volunteer groups sending supplies to third-world countries," he noted.

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