New bug prompts earlier end to Google+ social network
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The Google+ social network will close in April 2019—four
months earlier than planned—and the internet giant
will focus on operating a version tailored for
businesses, according to G Suite product
management vice president David Thacker.

Application programming interface programs
(APIs) used by developers to access Google+ data
will be shut down within 90 days, according to
Thacker.

"With the discovery of this new bug, we have
decided to expedite the shut-down of all Google+
APIs," Thacker said in a blog post.

"While we recognize there are implications for
developers, we want to ensure the protection of
our users."

A new bug introduced via a software update in
November was discovered during routine testing
and fixed, according to the company.

Google determined that the vulnerability affected
approximately 52.5 million users, allowing
applications to see profile information such as
name, occupation, age and email address even if
access was set to private.

"No third party compromised our systems, and we
have no evidence that the app developers that
inadvertently had this access for six days were
aware of it or misused it in any way," Thacker said.

In October, Google announced plans to shut down
the social network after fixing a bug exposing
private data in as many as 500,000 accounts.

A security audit had revealed a software bug that
gave third-party apps access to Google+ private
profile data people meant to share only with friends.

The data involved was limited to optional profile
fields, including name, age, gender, occupation and
email address, Google said.

There was no evidence found at the time that
developers had taken advantage of the bug,
according to Google.

Google+ failed to gain meaningful traction after
being launched in 2011 as a challenge to
Facebook.

A Google spokesperson cited "significant
challenges in creating and maintaining a successful
Google+ that meets consumers' expectations"
along with "very low usage" as reasons for pulling
the plug.

The social network allows users to download and
share data such as pictures and videos.

Meanwhile, Google planned to add new workplace-
oriented features to enhance the appeal of Google+ as a "secure corporate social network" to be used inside business operations.

"Our review showed that Google+ is better suited as an enterprise product where co-workers can engage in internal discussions," the California-based internet firm said.

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