

Yahoo Puts Meat On Open Strategy Bones.

SAN FRANCISCO--Yahoo on Monday began launching some of the serious aspects of its Yahoo Open Strategy, including a new version of Yahoo Mail that sorts the in-box according to your social connections and that can be expanded with mail-specific applications.

The first big change in Yahoo Mail is with its welcome page, which now spotlights messages from people in your Yahoo social network and invitations from others to join their social networks. Next, the in-box page now includes a new "from connections" button that shows messages only from those social connections.



Second is the arrival of online applications tied to Yahoo Mail. One inaugural program from Xoopit lets you view all the photos in your e-mail archive, even expanding links to online galleries. Another lets you convert an e-mail message into a WordPress blog post in two clicks.

"The opening of the mail platform is a huge benefit to users in terms of the additional forms of sharing and communication we can build in and to the dev who can build applications," said John Kremer, vice president of Yahoo Mail, speaking to reporters at a launch event here.

The Yahoo Open Strategy seeks to increase the number of users on Yahoo's Internet properties and the magnitude of their activity. If successful, both those goals would increase the number of pages on which Yahoo can show advertisements. However, Yahoo has lagged competitors such as Facebook with the addition of applications and a social dimension.

The Yahoo Mail change is one of a host announced Monday. Among others:

- Yahoo also announced changes to its customizable home page, My Yahoo, that lets you add applications and customize the page's appearance.
- A new toolbar for Web browsers also gets drop-down interactivity that can show what your contacts are doing, what e-mail you've received, and other information.
- Yahoo's media properties can spotlight your contacts' activities, such as when they assign a five-star ranking to a particular song.

"We wanted to establish a social dimension to a product," said Ash Patel, executive vice president of Yahoo's audience products division of the Yahoo Open Strategy goals. "We wanted to engage with the developer community and to open up the power of Yahoo's products and platforms."

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118 A Cass Street | Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2438 | Traverse City, Michigan (MI) USA 49685-2438
Tel: 231-922-9460 | Toll: 866-536-8614 | Fax: 231-929-3398
Office Hours: M-F 8AM-9PM EST* | Email: Info@peakpositions.com