

Facebook posts can be 'promoted' for a fee

Facebook has begun testing a new feature that would allow users to increase the visibility of their posts for a fee, in what appears to be a new bid to add more profitability to the social network.

"As part of a test starting today, people in the US can promote personal posts to their friends on Facebook," the company said in a statement issued last Wednesday.

"Sometimes a particular friend might not notice your post, especially if a lot of friends have been posting recently and your story isn't near the top of their feed," it said.

"When you promote a post, whether it's wedding photos, a garage sale, or big news, you bump it higher in news feed so your friends and subscribers are more likely to notice it."

The option will be made available to users with fewer than 5,000 friends and subscribers, Facebook said.

Facebook did not specify the price of the new service, but TechCrunch.com said it would start at \$7 per post, making it a potentially major source of profit for the social network, which says it now has over one billion members.

The testing began in New Zealand in May and has gradually spread to other countries.

A dismal stock market debut in May raised questions about Facebook's profitability and since then the company has said it is considering new revenue-generating schemes, including charging for some services.

Last month the company revamped its offers service to require payments, starting at \$5 per ad, for the deals offered through Facebook, making companies pay for what had been free advertising until now.

Facebook has also added a feature that lets users send real-life cupcakes, coffee, stuffed animals or other gifts to friends in the social network.

The gifts program is being rolled out gradually, starting in the United States, and Facebook stands to get a fee for brokering purchases.

The world's largest social network has seen its stock price sag from its debut of \$38 a share to the current level of \$21.83.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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