

Facebook's Graph Search - a story of 'three' halves ... investors, users and businesses...

LONDON, UK: Further to speculation that has been building up over week, Facebook has announced an addition to its social network - a smart search engine it has called "[Graph Search](#)". It is designed to allow people using Facebook to find answers more quickly to questions about friends in their Social Graph.



Andreas Poulos, COO at leading London-based digital marketing agency, Greenlight, says the announcement is a story of 'three' halves.

On the one hand, users will be very happy to get this new functionality that Facebook is calling 'Graph Search'. It is innovative and powerful, and will allow people to search within Facebook, albeit restricted to what they can see and read right now. It allows the user to search across people, places and interests using structured queries, e.g. 'Friends who like Star Wars and Harry Potter, or more usefully perhaps 'Which restaurants do my friends like in London'. Ordinarily the user would ask that question by posting it on their wall, now the tools are there to allow the user to just search. Innovative, very cool and the first major addition of functionality Facebook has seen since Timeline.

On the other hand however, Poulos says it is unlikely to be enough to allay investor concerns over Facebook's commercial focus.

What? No 'Facefone'?

Many had expected Facebook would have launched a new mobile phone today or thrown down the gauntlet to Google and challenged the company in Web Search supremacy, neither of which happened. Web Search is a touchy subject as everyone knows that it is a hugely lucrative market, and one Facebook was expected to enter. Graph Search may well be a precursor to that but Poulos fears investors will suspect that it's too little progress.

In addition, somewhere in the middle, businesses are likely to become more visible within Facebook given that many of these searches will bring up their pages in Graph Search results. However, this may simply offset the reduction in visibility brands have experienced due to Facebook's Promoted Posts mechanism that has limited the exposure of brand posts on user newsfeeds (where businesses are prompted to pay for their post to reach a wider audience). In addition, it is unclear at this stage if or how Facebook will monetise Graph Search.

Ultimately, says Poulos, this is progress, which is welcome, but whether this is good for everyone rests on if and how Facebook chooses to monetise this new mechanism, and to what degree it is a stepping stone to a more aggressive product strategy.

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