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**Sent:** Monday, April 07, 2014 1:06 PM  
**To:** Georgia Fojo  
**Subject:** AFTERNOON NEWS CLIPS-4.7.14

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**MUST READ:**

**Facebook Courts Developers with New Approach to Platform**

**The Information//Eric Newcomer**

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<https://www.theinformation.com/Facebook-Courts-Developers-with-New-Approach-to-Platform>

**FACEBOOK RELATED:**

**Forget Dating Sites, Try Facebook Instead To Find the One**

**TIME//Alice Park**

Online dating can be so stressful – filling out the profile and keeping up with all the interactions can feel like a job – so it's no surprise that sometimes digital romance blooms under more Facebook friend-ly circumstances.

<http://time.com/50402/facebook-the-new-marriage-matchmaker/>

**Facebook Wants to Turn 25 Million Small Businesses Into Advertisers**

**Ad Age//Cotton Delo**

After years of courting the nation's biggest advertisers, Facebook is going after the 99%. That figure represents the long tail of advertisers; the plumbers and dentists, restaurants and political candidates, app developers and direct-response advertisers. These small and mid-sized businesses don't have Facebook account reps and are left to figure out Facebook advertising for themselves.

<http://adage.com/article/digital/facebook-turn-small-businesses-advertisers/292495/>

**Algorithm Predicts Which Photos Will Go Viral On Facebook**

**Social News Daily//Megan Charles**

Stanford University researchers have developed a computer algorithm that can predict which photos will likely go viral on Facebook.

[http://socialnewsdaily.com/34532/algorithm-predicts-which-photos-will-go-viral-on-facebook/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+SocialNewsDaily+%28Social+News+Daily%29](http://socialnewsdaily.com/34532/algorithm-predicts-which-photos-will-go-viral-on-facebook/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SocialNewsDaily+%28Social+News+Daily%29)

**Salt Lake Mom Monitoring Facebook Helped Thwart Teen Shooting, Police Say**

**Deseret News//Pat Reavy**

A planned shooting near West High School involving a student was thwarted late last week thanks to a mother keeping an eye on her son's Facebook page, according to police.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865600418/Salt-Lake-mom-monitoring-Facebook-helped-thwart-teen-shooting-police-say.html>

**INSTAGRAM RELATED:**

**Instagram Helps Launch Careers of Local Talents**

**Arab News//Sultan Al-Sughair**

Instagram has opened the door to many young talents and has enabled them to break the barriers of their own countries to reach various countries worldwide by sharing photographs of their work.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/551776>

**BUSINESS:**

**Twitter Acquires Android Lockscreen App Cover, Moves Deeper Into Mobile Services**

**TechCrunch//Ingrid Lunden**

A very interesting acquisition announcement from Twitter today: it's buying Cover, an Android lockscreen app that lets you customise what apps you see and when. For now, Cover will remain live in the Play store.

<http://techcrunch.com/2014/04/07/twitter-acquires-android-lockscreen-app-cover-moves-deeper-into-mobile-services/>

#### **Andromeda: Google's Secret Weapon To Keep Amazon And Microsoft On Their Toes**

**ReadWrite//Jodi Mardesich**

Google Compute Engine, the version of Google's infrastructure it rents out to developers, is getting access to Andromeda, a set of technologies the company uses to speed up its own networking. Last week, it turned Andromeda on in two of its four Compute Engine zones this week.

<http://readwrite.com/2014/04/07/andromeda-google-software-defined-networking#awesm=~oAMbffVse3EewF>

#### **E-Learning Platform Lynda.com Buys Compilr To Add In-Browser Coding Tools, Price Around \$20M**

**TechCrunch//Ingrid Lunden**

Lynda.com, the online education platform that raised its first and only round of \$103 million about a year ago, is today announcing an acquisition that will further Lynda.com's reach with developers and expand the kinds of services it can offer to users.

<http://techcrunch.com/2014/04/07/e-learning-platform-lynda-com-buys-compilr-to-add-in-browser-coding-tools-price-around-20m/>

#### **POLICY//POLITICAL:**

##### **High Court Won't Take Up NSA Case**

**The Hill//Julian Hattem**

The Supreme Court on Monday declined an initial challenge to the National Security Agency's (NSA) bulk collection of information about the public's telephone calls.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/hillicon-valley/technology/202809-high-court-wont-take-up-nsa-case>

##### **GOP Bill Keeps US Internet Control**

**The Hill//Peter Kasperowicz**

Rep. Sean Duffy (R-Wis.) has proposed legislation that would block the federal government from handing over control of the Internet management system.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/technology/202811-gop-bill-prevents-us-from-giving-up-internet-control>

#### **INTERNATIONAL:**

##### **Google Appeals Ongoing YouTube Blockade in Turkey**

**RT//Staff Writer**

US internet giant Google has gone to Turkey's Constitutional Court to appeal the government's decision to block its video file sharing service YouTube. The ban, which had been imposed before local elections, has been upheld by a local court ruling.

<http://rt.com/news/google-appeals-youtube-turkey-929/>

##### **WhatsApp, E-Plus Launch A €10 SIM In Germany With Free WhatsApp Usage Included**

**TechCrunch//Ingrid Lunden**

Back in February, Jan Koum, CEO of Facebook-owned WhatsApp, hinted that the company would soon be unveiling a new way of working with carriers, first in Germany, with special tariffs to access the app. Today that deal is now live. E-Plus now sells a prepaid SIM that gives users unlimited access to WhatsApp outside of their data plans.

<http://techcrunch.com/2014/04/07/whatsapp-launches-a-e10-sim-with-e-plus-in-germany-with-free-whatsapp-usage-included/>

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#### **FULL TEXT ARTICLES**

#### **MUST READ:**

##### **Facebook Courts Developers with New Approach to Platform**

**The Information//Eric Newcomer**

When Facebook convenes its first developer conference in three years later this month, the social networking giant will be aiming to draw software makers closer to its booming mobile business—and convince them that it has learned from its often-troubled efforts to serve as a platform for third-party developers.

Facebook's new approach to partnerships stresses ever-improving tools that allow software developers—especially those building mobile applications—to tap into the company's identity services and much-touted "social graf." By having people log-in via Facebook and allow access to their Facebook profiles, software makers can learn a lot about customers' friends and interests and improve their offerings accordingly.

Ilya Sukhar, founder of an app-services provider called Parse that was acquired by Facebook last year, was a key organizer of the upcoming event, signaling the importance the company attaches to the mobile analytics and notification tools that Parse provides. Some developers expect the

company to announce deeper integration of Parse into Facebook's own products for developers, such as its payments system and its advertising services.

Facebook's platform goals are in some respects more modest than they were five or seven years ago, when many game developers and others leaped at the chance to build products and businesses that were fully integrated into Facebook. The social network had positioned itself as a universe unto itself that had everything a third-party developer needed to build a business. Most importantly, it offered the chance to attract customers quickly and cheaply through automated notifications and invitations to friends.

Facebook-centric companies such as social gaming firm Zynga enjoyed exponential growth for a time. But Facebook ultimately left many partners feeling burned when it changed its algorithms to cut down on social spam and all but eviscerated many third-party apps in the process.

Now Facebook aims to be less an all-encompassing Web environment than a vendor of unique tools and advertising services, especially for the mobile world. With 53% of its ad revenue now coming from mobile, Facebook needs close relationships with mobile app developers. But without a mobile phone operating system of its own, Facebook has to earn those relationships with more than a promise of a large audience.

Game-makers and other mobile app developers are already among Facebook's best mobile advertising customers. Facebook in turn has become a critical vehicle for getting people to install news apps on their phones—and use them regularly.

#### The Power of Login

Facebook has said little about what new products or services might debut at F8, which will feature a keynote from CEO Mark Zuckerberg and about 20 sessions, including tracks on building, growing and monetizing apps. But developers are clear on what they see as the priorities.

One key item is Facebook Login, which can be used to connect apps to data and personal information on the Facebook platform. It's the tool that enables the Nike+ Running app to send information on a customer's athletic accomplishments to their Facebook feed, for example, or lets patrons of Goodreads share what books they've read. Of the top 100 grossing iPhone applications in the U.S., 81 offer Facebook Login, according to Facebook. (On Android it's 62 out of 100.)

But even though Facebook Login provides more information about customers than similar services offered by Twitter and Google, developers say that many people are reluctant to log in with Facebook's tool because they worry that the apps will post directly to their feeds or otherwise interact with their Facebook friends in unpredictable ways.

That can be a problem for app developers, many of whom prefer that people use Facebook Login because Facebook ad campaigns work much better when they do.

Now Facebook aims to be less an all-encompassing Web environment than a vendor of unique tools and advertising services, especially for the mobile world.

A Facebook spokeswoman said the company has already made moves to improve the percentage of app users who log in using Facebook's tool.

"In 2013, we started requiring apps to ask permission before posting on behalf of people back to Facebook," a Facebook spokeswoman wrote in an email. "By splitting this authorization process into two distinct pieces, we aimed to tackle the problem of social spam and surprise that came from people not understanding they were agreeing to share back to Facebook."

Parse is will also be a big topic. The service lets app developers send notifications to their users urging them to keep using their application, for example. Parse also offers to tools that let developers save data in the cloud, integrate third party login tools to their apps and analyze their users behavior.

App developers are expecting a lot of discussion of advertising as well. Facebook mobile ads have proven very effective for driving app downloads in particular, but the most desirable inventory is scarce as app-makers chase the same small set of money-spending customers.

"I think they're going to talk a lot about their ad network that they're going to be developing," says Chris DeWolfe, CEO of SGN, though he doesn't have an inside view on the company's thinking.

Right now, Facebook sells ads only inside its own Facebook feed, but with an ad network it would also place targeted ads on third-party sites using its own trove of data and identity tools. A company spokeswoman declined to comment on the ad network plans.

#### Some Still Cautious

While app developers say they're encouraged by the tools Facebook has been building, many remain mindful of the company's history and are wary of integrating too closely with Facebook.

"We wasted so many cycles—hundreds of thousands of dollars—chasing Facebook's distribution model," says Matt Mahan, CEO of Causes. "It's been six very painful years."

Causes is now focusing on its own Website after launching with Facebook's platform in 2007 and spending years trying to make Facebook it's primary hub for doing business. Indeed, Causes was among the last to make such a move: Facebook's platform on the web is a shadow of what it

once was. Many apps simply refer people to their company's website. Games dominate, and represent the vast majority of applications that are located within the company's website.

One test of whether Facebook has truly turned over a new leaf with developers may lie in how the company handles its own emerging emerging hodge-podge of standalone apps. The company recently launched Paper and Messenger, for example, but developers don't yet know whether they will be invited to integrate with those apps in some fashion or even show their ads there.

However it plays out, though, the days of the Facebook being a make-or-break platform for developers are over.

"There's not a lot Facebook could do to cause problems for us," says Ryan Matzner, a director at the mobile app developer Fueled.

#### **FACEBOOK RELATED:**

##### **Forget Dating Sites, Try Facebook Instead To Find the One**

**TIME//Alice Park**

Not only are more people meeting on social networks, but their relationships were happier than those that began offline in more traditional ways.

Online dating can be so stressful – filling out the profile and keeping up with all the interactions can feel like a job – so it's no surprise that sometimes digital romance blooms under more Facebook friend-ly circumstances.

Jeffrey Hall, associate professor of Communication Studies at University of Kansas, was surprised to learn that 7% of people who married after meeting online had met for the first time on social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and ClassMates – not matchmaking chat rooms, or online dating sites or via other romance-centric cyber connections.

"It was really, really astonishing, since [romantic relationships] aren't the purpose of these sites," he says of the data, which came from eHarmony, the online dating service.

Hall decided to investigate the connection, and learn more about who was meeting their significant other this way, and how well these marriages fared. The sample included 19,131 participants who had been married once between 2005 and 2012, and were asked where they met – was it online dating sites; email or instant messaging; online communities such as chat rooms or virtual reality games; or social networking sites.

Those who met on social networking sites were more likely to be younger, married more recently, and African American compared to those who met on other ways on the internet.

And when the participants were compared on marital satisfaction, the partners who met via social networking reported being just as happy as those who were introduced on online dating sites, which tout their compatibility benefits, and more satisfied than those who met on online communities, which nurture conversations among people with similar interests and beliefs. What surprised Hall even more, however, was that the social networking-based relationships were happier than those that began offline, in traditional ways such as being introduced by mutual friends.

"I was surprised by a lot of these results," he says. "I think that social networking is the digital version of being introduced by friends." For most of the 20th century, friend-based introductions were the primary way people met their spouse, he says, and social networks may simply be an extension of that pattern.

That could also explain why marriages that began on social networking sites were also no more likely to end in divorce than unions that were generated by online dating sites that involve algorithms and strangers trying to match people together, rather than acquaintances who know their friends' likes and dislikes and personality best.

Social networking sites also have another potential advantage over dating services – they aren't burdened by the pressure of trying to find love and the anxiety of having to present yourself in the best possible light to catch a mate. While there's no truth filter on sites like Facebook, and there is certainly some amount of self-promotion and exaggeration, having your circle of friends visit your page can keep you pretty honest, which means by and large, your social network version of you is relatively close to the real thing – at least that's what the studies show.

The result? Conversations, observations and interactions on social networking sites may be more casual and low risk, relieved of the pressure and anticipation of a potential date (or rejection for a potential date) that shadow every picture, message and response on dating sites. "In part, social networking sites provide a low risk, high reward place to meet people," says Hall. "It's a good place to do some investigating and a good place to learn about people that doesn't carry the self-presentational weight of creating an online dating profile."

The fact that most of the marriages were among African-Americans could reflect the fact that at the time the data were collected, between 2005 and 2012, African-Americans and Latinos were over-represented on social networking sites compared to their proportions in the general population. For these groups, he says, such sites may have been a way to expand their already close-knit network of friends to include others like them, but not yet part of their local connections.

Of course, the data may also reflect more early social networking behavior than the way that people use the sites today. While it dominated the early days of cyber connecting, for example, MySpace was surpassed by Facebook in 2008 as the primary source of online interactions. And the

rising age of Facebook users may also have an effect on the patterns that Hall found. While it's possible that people who meet and marry via social networking sites may always be from a young demographic, it's also possible that as more people join the site, including those who are looking for a second chance at love later in life, could drive that average age up.

What the results do show is that we shouldn't be so quick to dismiss social networks as an important tool for finding love in the 21st century. According to a Pew Research Center Internet Project poll, in 2013, 24% of internet users have flirted with someone online, compared to 15% in 2005. And Hall's findings suggest that those flirtations, if they're on social networking sites, are increasingly likely to lead to meaningful relationships, and even happy marriages.

#### **Facebook Wants to Turn 25 Million Small Businesses Into Advertisers**

##### **Ad Age//Cotton Delo**

After years of courting the nation's biggest advertisers, Facebook is going after the 99%. That figure represents the long tail of advertisers; the plumbers and dentists, restaurants and political candidates, app developers and direct-response advertisers. These small and mid-sized businesses don't have Facebook account reps and are left to figure out Facebook advertising for themselves.

It's an operational challenge for the social network, which has invested heavily to educate big brands and agencies about its products. To tackle the long tail, it won't build out a large customer-service teams like YP or Gannett, which specialize in local sales. The idea is to make the product intuitive and steer Facebook page administrators to "boost" posts that are performing well with some ad spend through notifications on their page.

"All the traditional things people think about -- like a sales channel through YP or a call center -- they're all good, but we're dealing with a scale that's really unprecedented," said Dan Levy, Facebook's director of small business. "And trying to figure out how you unlock that is intellectually fun but really hard."

Mr. Levy's team has doubled since he took on the role in July 2012. (It's in the "hundreds" across a few offices, including a call center in Austin.) It's recently started to do outreach to customers whose ads are under-performing -- a departure from its past strategy of just responding to people who've flagged an issue.

But there are only so many small and medium-sized businesses Facebook can talk to. From insights it gleans during those calls, it will get better at simplifying the ad-buying experience for a broad swath, according to Mr. Levy.

"In an ideal world, I don't have to call [someone]. I can do that marketing on Facebook," he said. "But until we've figured it out, that's what we're going to do. It's a lot of prototyping until we can build stuff into the product."

Facebook is borrowing from its big brand and agency strategy in one respect. It's formed an SMB Council comprised of 12 businesses, a structure that's reminiscent of its Client Council that includes chief marketers from P&G, Coke, Walmart and Unilever among its members. With both groups, Facebook solicits feedback on how its products can be improved. (For the big spenders, it also gives a peek at what's on the product roadmap.)

The SMB Council convened at Facebook's Menlo Park, Calif. headquarters for the first time last month, and its 18 members will serve for six months up to a year.

##### **The Council**

Council members include an equity theater company in New Jersey with a six-figure marketing budget for the year that intends to spend 30 to 35% of it on Facebook; an auction site for jewelry and clothes that operates on the social network, whose owners spent \$60,000 on Facebook ads last year; and a Kansas City, Mo.-based plumbing company that spends \$300 a month on Facebook.

The recent decline of organic reach was a major discussion topic when the group convened in Silicon Valley last month. It's a sticky point for Facebook with advertisers of any size. Small businesses with limited advertising budgets are even more reliant on free publishing on Facebook than big brands.

That's borne out in the numbers: Facebook has over a million active advertisers. But 25 million small and medium-sized businesses have Facebook pages.

"The challenge is how to get businesses to understand the value that's there, since they weren't paying for it at all and now they're going to have to," said Jim Donio, president of the Eagle Theatre in Hammonton, N.J.

Mr. Donio wants to develop a Facebook education program for businesses and has yet to determine whether it would be free or for-profit and whether it would focus on theaters or a broader set of businesses.

Another Council member, Jeff Morgan of Kansas City's Morgan Miller Plumbing, is also thinking about potentially setting up a side business of Facebook classes.

He says his business makes \$2,000 a week in service calls that originate from Facebook. Its page is a mix of content, including employee spotlights, dog photos, and a recent shot of the dispatcher dressed as the Kansas City Royals mascot to celebrate baseball's opening day.

"About one in every 10 posts is about plumbing," he said. "Other than that, we do stuff about puppy dogs and unicorns."

## **Algorithm Predicts Which Photos Will Go Viral On Facebook**

**Social News Daily//Megan Charles**

Stanford University researchers have developed a computer algorithm that can predict which photos will likely go viral on Facebook.

In a report being presented at the International World Wide Web Conference in Seoul, South Korea, Jure Leskovec, Stanford doctoral student Justin Cheng, Facebook researchers Lada Adamic and P Alex Dow, and Cornell University computer scientist Jon Kleinberg, describe how they created an algorithm capable of accurately predicting (8 out of 10 times) which Facebook posted photos would go viral.

Statistically, based on data provided by Facebook scientists, only one in 20 photos posted on the social network gets shared maybe once. And just one in 4,000 gets more than 500 shares.

While reviewing what they called photo cascades, researchers studied how quickly a photo was seen and shared – garnering clues as to how a photo goes from being relatively obscure to prolific on cyberspace.

The term 'cascades' is used to describe photos or videos being shared multiple times.

The team began by analyzing 150,000 Facebook photos, each of which had been shared at least five times. The data was stripped of identifiers to protect user privacy.

A preliminary analysis of test photos revealed that, at any given point in a cascade, there was a 50-50 chance that the number of shares would double. Variables were assessed in order to determine when doubling events would likely occur, explains The Stanford Daily.

After factoring other criteria, the scientists were able to accurately predict doubling events almost 80 percent of the time. The speed of sharing was the best predictor. Their algorithm became more accurate the more times a photo was shared; 88 percent for photos shared hundreds of times.

But what aspects of a photo drives it to go viral? Alas, other than being shared on multiple platforms, the researchers found no simple trick to ensure widespread sharing.

## **Salt Lake Mom Monitoring Facebook Helped Thwart Teen Shooting, Police Say**

**Deseret News//Pat Reavy**

A planned shooting near West High School involving a student was thwarted late last week thanks to a mother keeping an eye on her son's Facebook page, according to police.

On Friday, a West High parent called the school's resource officer — who is also a Salt Lake police officer — to report comments allegedly written by two male teenagers on Facebook claiming they were going to shoot her son.

"She had actually read threats and seen the threat on his Facebook page," said Salt Lake police detective Greg Wilking. "There were very specific threats that they were going to go to the high school and shoot her son."

In addition, Wilking said, "There was a picture of the gun on Instagram, the gun that was seized. And there were letters written on the hand that was holding the gun, and those letters were gang affiliated."

Just after 2 p.m., the officer found the teens in a vehicle parked at 220 W. 300 North, close by the school. Inside the vehicle officers reported finding a gun and a loaded magazine, cash, marijuana and a "large bong."

The teens may have been waiting for their intended target to walk by after school, Wilking said.

Police could not say Monday whether the two teenagers who were arrested were also West High students. Two boys, ages 16 and 17, were booked into juvenile detention for investigation of various charges, said Wilking. The incident is believed to be gang related.

Wilking praised the intended victim's mother for actively monitoring her son's social media pages, and contacting police when she saw a potential threat.

## **INSTAGRAM RELATED:**

### **Instagram Helps Launch Careers of Local Talents**

**Arab News//Sultan Al-Sughair**

Many online social networking sites, including Instagram, have become global technological phenomena, which have helped launch the careers of many local talents.

Instagram has opened the door to many young talents and has enabled them to break the barriers of their own countries to reach various countries worldwide by sharing photographs of their work.

Laila Al-Thamir, a student, said that she takes shots of her daily life activities especially her hobbies, whether cooking or embroidery, then chooses a photo to share on her Instagram account.

"Many of my friends and acquaintances like my photos and many colleagues call to ask for a certain dish's recipe from the ones I shared on Instagram," she said.

Meanwhile, Norah Al-Saleh, a student, pointed out that photography is a hobby that is no longer expensive and has become accessible to many due to the technical developments in devices.

She said, "I still remember the days when I used to ask my father to take my film rolls to the studio to print the photos, it used to take several hours or a day to pick the photos up and pay for them."

Al-Saleh said that cameras have evolved and become high-resolution devices and with the presence of social networking sites time and money are no longer wasted, as these sites offer an expedient and efficient platform to share art and ideas.

She said, "People can take pictures using their mobile phones at any moment, and share their shots immediately."

Na'eema Al-Yousif, an employee, highlighted that Instagram is a beautiful phenomenon that highlights women's productivity and talents and creates a network of support.

Agreeing with Al-Yousif, Kareema Al-Rubai'a, a university student, added that the application has given men and women the opportunity and means to express their creativity.

Abdullah Al-Maghluث, a specialist in digital media, said that many individuals launched their careers and received wide recognition by posting pictures of their work on Instagram.

He said, "Nowadays, many international newspapers dedicate a corner to publish pictures taken from social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This indicates the power of these sites in reaching the masses in an immediate, convenient and effective manner."

## BUSINESS:

### **Twitter Acquires Android Lockscreen App Cover, Moves Deeper Into Mobile Services**

**TechCrunch//Ingrid Lunden**

A very interesting acquisition announcement from Twitter today: it's buying Cover, an Android lockscreen app that lets you customise what apps you see and when. For now, Cover will remain live in the Play store.

"If that changes down the road, we'll provide another update here," the founders Todd Jackson, Gordon Luk and Edward Ho note in a blog post announcing the deal.

Cover is being somewhat cryptic in discussing what it will be working on at Twitter. "Twitter, like Cover, believes in the incredible potential of Android," they write. "They share our vision that smartphones can be a lot smarter — more useful and more contextual — and together we're going to make that happen. We'll be building upon a lot of what makes Cover great, and we're thrilled to create something even better at Twitter."

At the same time, when you consider the work that Facebook has done in developing its Home service around the Android lockscreen, it's clear that on some level, if an app is not owning the SIM that controls the entire phone, or the operating system, this is one very obvious way to remain front of mind for a user and incorporate a series of services that become front and center features for a user.

Apps are an overcrowded game. So owning the lockscreen gives you, effectively, a place to be first in the queue. It also gives Twitter some interesting potential routes for how it might longer-term try to deliver its stream of followers' new and messages outside of its own app. Widgets featuring Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and other streams are already quite common; Cover could work on ways to formalise and improve that experience.

One question that lingers for me is how, when, and if companies like Twitter (and Facebook) will ever be able to think about these problems in the same way on iOS.

More generally, mobile has become a huge business for Twitter. Apart from the fact that Twitter was created as a mobile-first service, Twitter generates more in advertising from mobile than it does from desktop. Cover, meanwhile, says it has picked up "hundreds of thousands" of users since launching in October 2013.

To date, Cover had raised \$1.7 million in funding, a seed round from First Round Capital, Harrison Metal, Max Levchin, Scott Banister, Charlie Cheever, Keith Rabois, Dave Girouard and Alex Franz.

More to come.

## **Andromeda: Google's Secret Weapon To Keep Amazon And Microsoft On Their Toes**

**ReadWrite//Jodi Mardesich**

Years ago, Google figured out that users prize speed above almost everything when it comes to surfing the Web. They're now applying that insight to courting developers, too, through a tool named Andromeda.

Google Compute Engine, the version of Google's infrastructure it rents out to developers, is getting access to Andromeda, a set of technologies the company uses to speed up its own networking. Last week, it turned Andromeda on in two of its four Compute Engine zones this week.

**Enter Andromeda**

Andromeda's not a product Google's cloud customers can sign up for, and it doesn't have APIs developers can write to directly. So, what's the fuss about?

Google Distinguished Engineer Amin Vahdat described it in a post:

Andromeda is a Software Defined Networking (SDN)-based substrate for our network virtualization efforts. It is the orchestration point for provisioning, configuring, and managing virtual networks and in-network packet processing.

Let's unpack that: Increasingly, rather than setting up data centers, storage, and networks by setting up new servers, companies are using software to run existing hardware in new ways. By defining usage in software, you can disaggregate and share expensive physical resources. In the case of software-defined networking, the resources—servers, routers, switches, and so on—are deep in the bowels of Google's data centers, which provide the underpinnings for its cloud infrastructure.

Network virtualization means that even though many customers are sharing the same network—both Google itself, as well as its cloud customers—they can be configured and managed independently, with their own address management, firewalls, and access control lists.

"If you choose to run your own infrastructure, you can make those investments, but it requires you to figure out how to scale this out and manage it," says Google product manager Sunil James. "Google Cloud gives you the ability to grow your business at whatever scale you need. Andromeda is an example of the kind of thinking we have at Google in terms of how we want to make something scalable and robust, not only for Google to use, but for our customers."

For Google customers, that means they have to make fewer tradeoffs when they move their computing to the cloud.

Google is far from alone in taking the software-defined approach to its network. Amazon and Microsoft, its archrivals in cloud computing, also use SDN. Microsoft has had 100 developers working for four years on software-defined networking features for Azure. Like Google, it uses the same SDN technologies for its own services like Xbox Live, Skype and Office 365 that it does in Azure. Amazon Web Services has had software-defined networking features like CloudFormation for years.

But while Google may be playing catch-up in rolling out SDN features to developers, it has the unique advantage of the gigantic scale of its in-house computing infrastructure, which it has honed for high-throughput performance.

**Vying For Developers**

Last month, Google slashed its cloud pricing. Now Andromeda gives it another weapon in the battle for developers—performance. In this case, that means the speed of data transmission.

Even though Google just turned on Andromeda in some of its cloud last week, customers are already noticing a difference.

David Mytton, CEO of Server Density, a server- and website-monitoring service based in London, ran benchmarks comparing throughput of Google Cloud without Andromeda, Google Cloud with Andromeda, and Amazon's EC2 service. With Andromeda, he said Google was nine times faster than Amazon. (That sounds remarkable, but it's actually just a modest improvement, since even without Andromeda, Mytton found Google's performance was seven times that of Amazon.)

Data throughput is only one way to benchmark cloud-computing services, and it may not matter to all customers. Still, the combination of lowered prices and high performance is compelling for some.

Mytton, who is evaluating cloud providers as he considers a move from his current provider, SoftLayer, said he is leaning toward Google due to its performance and lower cost.

"Amazon is very expensive," he said. "You have to pay a lot of upfront costs."

Still, there are some services he is still looking for, like "the ability to have guaranteed throughput between regions," which Google doesn't currently offer. The good news is that Andromeda provides a foundation to build those services in the future.

**E-Learning Platform Lynda.com Buys Compilr To Add In-Browser Coding Tools, Price Around \$20M**

**TechCrunch//Ingrid Lunden**

Lynda.com, the online education platform that raised its first and only round of \$103 million about a year ago, is today announcing an acquisition that will further Lynda.com's reach with developers and expand the kinds of services it can offer to users. It's acquiring Compilr, a Halifax, Canada startup that runs a cloud-based platform for people to learn, write and test code from within a browser. The companies are not commenting on the terms of the deal but we have heard that it is for around \$20 million.

Compilr will now become part of the Lynda.com platform.

It looks like Compilr, co-founded and run by Patrick Hankinson and Tim Speed, was bootstrapped before today. That's something that aligns well with the culture and ethos at Lynda.com, which was also self-funded until it took its mammoth round from Accel and Spectrum Equity last year. But that lack of outside investment may have also been one of the things that hindered Compilr's growth longer term. In 2012, Hankinson noted that Compilr was rejected by more than 35 VCs — something that compelled the company to implement charging models early on, with monthly subscriptions to the service costing \$10.

It's not clear if those prices will remain intact; Lynda for now is not commenting further on the deal. In any case, existing Compilr users are being offered free training now on Lynda.com.

Compilr is only Lynda.com's second acquisition ever. The first was Germay's video2brain last year, made to grow the company's international portfolio.

So where will Compilr fit into Lynda.com? Up to now, a lot of Lynda.com's business has been based around an expansive collection of videos covering the areas of software and technology, as well as general business training and the creative industries. That catalog is pushing some 100,000 videos to date. Compilr will not only add more on-site training abilities, with its cloud-based platform for creating code; but it will help Lynda.com expand more in the specific vertical of tech and offering services and courses to developers (and developers in training).

"The acquisition of Compilr reflects our dedication to providing members the best way to learn across a variety of segments, whether we build or buy to achieve those goals," Eric Robison, president and CEO of lynda.com, said in a statement. "We recognize the growing market demand for programming language instruction and are committed to providing a broad range of high-quality computer programming courses. This aligns with our learning philosophy and allows us to maintain and grow our market leadership."

As a famous VC once said, software is eating the world, and so the need for more software engineers is certainly not diminishing. Lynda.com cites figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that project employment of software developers growing 22% between 2012 and 2022, "much faster than the average for all occupations."

Compilr currently supports some 12 programming languages and offers courses and support for beginners as well as advanced programmers.

Compilr competes with the likes of Koding, Cloud9 IDE, and Codenvy.

#### **POLICY//POLITICAL:**

##### **High Court Won't Take Up NSA Case**

##### **The Hill//Julian Hattem**

The Supreme Court on Monday declined an initial challenge to the National Security Agency's (NSA) bulk collection of information about the public's telephone calls.

The high court passed on a chance to review a lower court ruling that found the controversial program "almost Orwellian," which means the case will go through the normal appeals process as lawmakers battle over reform proposals.

An intervention from the court would have been unusual, but conservative activist and lawyer Larry Klayman had tried to leapfrog the appeals process because of the importance of the issue.

The NSA program collects phone metadata, a list of which numbers people call as well as the frequency and duration of their calls, but not the content of the conversations themselves.

The issue has become the subject of a slew of court challenges from Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), the American Civil Liberties Union and other advocacy groups.

In December, Judge Richard Leon of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., said that the NSA program, revealed by former agency contractor Edward Snowden, was likely unconstitutional. The ruling was a major blow to defenders of the spy agency and preceded a similar ruling from a government civil liberties panel in January.

Other judges have disagreed. A judge on the New York District Court ruled to uphold the program, as have judges on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

The high court's decision not to take up the case comes as Congress has begun debating legislative ways to end the NSA's data collection.

A plan unveiled by the White House late last month, which would need to be passed by Congress, would keep the records in the hands of private phone companies, accessible to government agents with a court order.

Another proposal from leaders of the House Intelligence Committee would similarly end the government's collection of the records, but make it easier for agents to obtain them from a private company.

Congress needs to authorize reforms to the program by next June or else lose it altogether, an outcome intelligence officials have said would be disastrous.

The case is *Klayman v. Obama*.

#### **GOP Bill Keeps US Internet Control**

##### **The Hill//Peter Kasperowicz**

Rep. Sean Duffy (R-Wis.) has proposed legislation that would block the federal government from handing over control of the Internet management system.

Back in March, the Department of Commerce said it would begin to cede control over the system that operates the Internet's domain name system. That system is now controlled by the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

The NTIA said it would continue to oversee the Internet Corp. for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) through September 2015, but then it would ease out of the role.

That announcement led to immediate criticism that the move would reduce the control the U.S. has over Internet functions and increase the risk that Internet freedom could slip away without that U.S. influence. Duffy's bill, H.R. 4398, says flatly that the NTIA cannot cede its control.

"As Americans, we value our constitutional right of freedom of speech and have promoted this value throughout the world," he said in a statement to The Hill. "We should not give up our stewardship of the Internet so that the United Nations or countries like China or Russia, that do not hold free speech in the same regard, can have the opportunity to take control."

Duffy's bill is the Global Internet Freedom (GIF) Act. The two-page legislation says the assistant secretary of Commerce for communications and information "may not relinquish the responsibility of the National Telecommunications and information Administration with respect to the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority Functions."

#### **INTERNATIONAL:**

##### **Google Appeals Ongoing YouTube Blockade in Turkey**

##### **RT//Staff Writer**

US internet giant Google has gone to Turkey's Constitutional Court to appeal the government's decision to block its video file sharing service YouTube. The ban, which had been imposed before local elections, has been upheld by a local court ruling.

Google on Monday said it has filed three appeals to Turkish courts in relation to the ongoing blackout of YouTube. Three petitions have been filed to Turkish criminal, administrative and constitutional courts by Google's lawyers, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported.

According to the Hurriyet Daily News, YouTube's Turkish lawyer, Gonenc Gurkaynak, has filed a complaint to the Turkish Constitutional Court and a lawsuit demanding "a stay of execution and cancelation of the decision on the ban" to the 4th Administrative Court of Ankara. Gurkaynak also appealed the ruling of the Golbasi Criminal Court that annulled its own decision on lifting the ban on April 5.

Turkey's Telecommunications Authority (TIB) blocked YouTube on March 27 after allegedly leaked audiotapes of senior Turkish officials discussing a false flag operation against Syria emerged there days before local elections. While the government advocated the ban citing national security concerns, TIB cited a decision by Golbasi Criminal Court.

Curiously, the same Ankara-based court on Saturday changed its own decision by ordering only 15 YouTube videos to be banned instead of the entire service. The latest ruling followed a Constitutional Court order to unblock Twitter, which the court blasted as a violation of freedom of speech. Today's Zaman claimed that the lower court then issued a "self-critical" statement, also calling its earlier ruling a "major intervention into freedom of speech, a fundamental value of a democratic society."

However, the local prosecutor's office challenged the April-5 decision and it was promptly overturned by the higher Golbasi Criminal Court of First Instance, which stated the blocking of YouTube must continue until the "criminal content" is removed from the site.

A Google spokesman told the WSJ via email that "it is obviously very disappointing to people and businesses in Turkey that YouTube is still blocked, and we are actively challenging the ban in the courts." The outlet said Google's defense argued in the petitions that the nationwide blocking of YouTube is "overbroad" under Turkish law and then required a constitutional challenge "based on freedom of speech."

Google recently claimed that its services are being effectively blocked by Turkish internet providers, who reportedly are using all means to prevent the users from circumventing the ban. Turkish providers are also believed to be still blocking Twitter despite the Constitutional Court's ruling, which Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he has to obey but "do[es] not respect."

The recent scandals involving Erdogan's government and the social media ban that followed them caused outrage in Turkish society, with opposition-minded activists condemning the ban as an act of "censorship" and "dictatorship." However, Erdogan's AKP party's candidates managed to win at the March-30 local elections in 49 of the 81 Turkish regions, highlighting the Turkish leader's popularity despite all the controversy.

In Ankara, where the AKP and main opposition party, CHP, ran an extremely tight race, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets last week demanding that the Supreme Electoral Council recount the local election results. AKP was declared the winner in the Turkish capital with a slender one percent of margin. CHP filed an official recount request, while the protesters were pushed off Ankara's streets with police water cannon and tear gas.

#### **WhatsApp, E-Plus Launch A €10 SIM In Germany With Free WhatsApp Usage Included**

**TechCrunch//Ingrid Lunden**

Back in February, Jan Koum, CEO of Facebook-owned WhatsApp, hinted that the company would soon be unveiling a new way of working with carriers, first in Germany, with special tariffs to access the app. Today that deal is now live. E-Plus now sells a prepaid SIM that gives users unlimited access to WhatsApp outside of their data plans.

For €10 (\$14), users get 600 credits that can be used interchangeably for 1 megabyte of data, 1 minute of talk or 1 SMS (each costs 1 credit), plus all the WhatsApp messaging that they might want to use. It's not clear whether voice services, which WhatsApp says are coming but have yet to launch in Germany, will come as part of the deal or whether they will be charged separately.

As the German blog AndroidNext points out, WhatsApp is installed on some 90 percent of smartphones in the country already — working out to some 30 million users. In other words, this seems to be less about spreading the good word about WhatsApp as it is about E-Plus trying to pick up users off rival carriers. An aggressive move in a competitive market.

On the other hand, given that Germany is a "safe" market for WhatsApp (ironically a market that has been rather challenging for Facebook on the privacy front) it's a good place for it to try out new things like this to see how well they do. As the company — and Facebook — move deeper into mobile telephony services like voice, seeing if they can get users to pay up for "WhatsApp SIMs" is a logical step.

As for how it works, SIM top-ups, as well as top-ups for extra credits for the month, come via an interface that appears to be separate from WhatsApp itself but has been created with the same branding and styling as the app itself:

Longer term, E-Plus says that it will enable users to activate automatic top-ups. To promote the SIM, it's also encouraging users to recommend other friends to use it; for every two friends who use your reference code, you get an extra €10 credit.

This is not the first time that WhatsApp has worked with carriers; it offers reduced tariffs with bundles with some 50 different mobile operators worldwide. What's different here is how it has integrated with E-Plus to create a SIM, which now comes with WhatsApp branding along with the free usage allowance. It doesn't appear that taking the SIM lets you waive the \$0.99 annual subscription fee for WhatsApp itself that users need to pay after the first year of service, however.

We're reaching out to WhatsApp for more information and will update when we learn more.

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