

# i-technology

## Facebook Tracks Friends' Locations

### 'Places' feature goes on-line

(AP) -- Facebook's 500 million-plus users will soon be able to track friends' whereabouts across the United States, as the world's largest Internet social network adds technology to increasingly tie its virtual world to everyday life.

The new "Places" feature -- which begins rolling out last week to some users and goes nationwide within weeks -- is touted as a tool to help users share where they are, figure out who is in the vicinity, and check out happenings and services within the same locale.

The addition of so-called location services to Facebook -- a move that industry observers have speculated about for months -- opens new revenue opportunities for the company, but also presents it with delicate privacy challenges.

"Places" will be accessible via an Apple iPhone app that Facebook designed from Thursday, or from the social network's own mobile version on touchscreen



Facebook Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg unveils the company's new location services feature called places.

smartphones.

"This is not about broadcasting your location to the world, it's about sharing where you are with your friends," said Michael Sharon, product manager for "Places."

Users will be able to declare their whereabouts whenever they want, thereby opening themselves up potentially to offers, suggestions or advertisements about nearby businesses. Facebook on Wednesday said it had no immediate plans however to pursue such money-

making opportunities.

Users can "check in" from their smartphones, broadcasting their location -- anywhere from a restaurant to a park -- to their own Facebook friends. Their whereabouts are then flashed through the network's popular status updates.

Users can look up the locations of friends who are similarly "checked in" -- either via updates or on a separate Web page -- or tag friends who happen to physically be with them, thus declaring where they are.

## Internet Gadget Brings Free Calls

### Utilizing computers, smart phones, and iPads

(AP) -- The company behind the magicJack, the Internet phone gadget heavily advertised on television, has another trick up its sleeve: free phone calls from computers, smart phones and iPads.

The cost of phone calls routed over the Internet has been on a long slide. There are already a multitude of programs that allow free calling between computers, and some that allow free, but short, calls to regular phone numbers.

Another alternative, Google Voice, provides "free" calls to the U.S. and Canada, but you need a phone to use it, and if you're using a cell phone, it uses up minutes.

MagicTalk goes one better by eliminating fees for calling landline and cell phones in the U.S. and Canada, with no time limits on the calls.

The software is available for Windows and Mac computers. Versions for the iPhone, iPad, BlackBerry and Android phones will follow in Sep-



MagicJack CEO and founder Dan Borislow holds up a new and improved magicJack at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The Internet phone gadget allows free phone calls from computers, smart phones and iPads. (AP photo)

tember or October, said Dan Borislow, the CEO of VocalTec Communications Ltd.

Each magicTalk user gets a phone number that's associated with the software. Users will also be able to move their existing phone numbers to the service, for a fee, a feature that will be extended to magicJack users soon as well.

The reason the calls can be free is that VocalTec operates as a phone company, so it can charge other phone companies for calls placed to magicTalk and magicJack numbers. It also charges its users who dial phone numbers abroad.

Still, magicTalk will likely have slim-

mer profit margins than magicJack, which costs \$40 and comes with a year of free calling in the U.S. and Canada (an extra year costs \$20).

Although magicTalk calls won't be limited in duration, Borislow said it's not intended for nonstop calls around the clock. The company hasn't quite decided if the smart-phone versions will run over "3G" cellular broadband or if it will be restricted to Wi-Fi for better sound quality.

In January, Borislow showed off another prospective second act for the company: a device that connects wirelessly to cell phones in the home to route their calls via Internet, without costing the user any minutes.

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