



A (Mac) World Beyond Apple

Social networking company Imeem throws its own party, while a workshop shows how to play non-iTunes videos on iPods.

January 12, 2006

Macworld continued into its third day Thursday as the expo's popularity had unintended consequences: users and businesses leveraging Apple's success to their own advantage.

Imeem, a social networking company based in Palo Alto, California, opted to throw a bowling/pizza/beer bash nearby instead of renting booth space at Macworld. Meanwhile, at a Macworld lecture, users learned how to play video content not purchased from Apple's iTunes online music service.

It isn't so ironic that Apple's biggest conference, famous for the brand loyalty and wide demographics of its attendees, could be a stepping stone for those not quite on Team Apple.

'We think the center of your digital life isn't your web site, it's your IM buddy list.'
-Dalton Caldwell, Imeem

CEO and founder Steve Jobs developed his nonconformist attitude early in life. He is admired and feared for his unconventional management style, and has always wanted to make Apple's machines unlike any other personal computers on the market.

Imeem, whether intentionally or not, carried on some of that same spirit.

"Given the choice, I'd rather go to something like this than a convention," said Imeem CEO Dalton Caldwell. "It just seemed that having a party is more our style."

Launch Celebration

At the soiree, held next door to Macworld Wednesday evening, the company's 19 employees, as well as founders Jan Jannink and Mr. Caldwell, wore light blue T-shirts decorated with Imeem's logo and an Apple—celebrating Imeem's launch of social media applications designed specifically for the Mac platform.

Founded in December 2003, Imeem is a cross between instant messaging and networking sites like MySpace and Friendster (see [Online Networks Coming Back](#)). It allows users to share media and photos, create and read each other's blogs, and send instant messages.

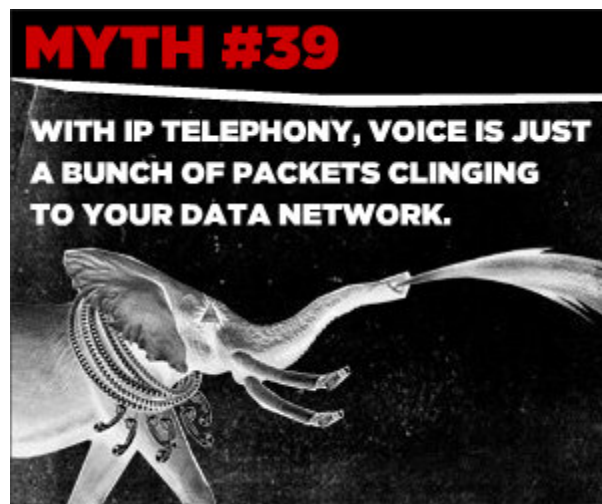
Unlike other networking sites, Imeem doesn't require that a user's friends and acquaintances sign up in order to see the user's content, unless the user has created a privacy setting. Instead, the information is based on the user's buddy list from Imeem, or from instant messaging services like AOL and Yahoo.

"We think the center of your digital life isn't your web site, it's your IM [instant messaging] buddy list," said Mr. Dalton.

Robust Features

"It's a supercharged IM system with pretty robust sharing features," added Ken Gullicksen of

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Morgenthaler Ventures, which invested in the company during early 2004. "It's much more robust than something like MySpace."

The Windows version of Imeem's applications debuted in September 2005, but the company had a harder time making it Mac-compatible.

Imeem joined forces with the open-source group Mono, which creates tools that allow applications created for Windows to run on Macintosh and Linux. But Imeem did not work with anyone at Apple.

The social networking service is free and earns revenue through ads that show up in the upper right-hand corner of the computer screen, according to Mr. Dalton.

He and Mr. Gullicksen declined to say how much money the company has made or what its goals are for 2006, but they pointed to the growth of web marketing.

Online advertising will have generated about \$14.7 billion during 2005, according to the market research firm [Forrester Research](#). By 2010, revenues are projected to reach almost \$19 billion, according to JupiterResearch.

There's another reason the company didn't need Macworld. Next week, its executives will be at the Sundance Film Festival, where celebrity bloggers like Efren Ramirez—who played Pedro in *Napoleon Dynamite*—will be using Imeem to speak to the masses.

Back at Macworld

The video iPod received some criticism when it debuted during October because it was unclear if it could play content other than videos purchased from Apple's iTunes online music store (see [Apple Up 9% After Video iPod](#)).

Macworld magazine editor and columnist Chris Breen offered advice at the trade show on how to solve the non-iTunes video issue.

"We'll talk about ripping your own videos so you never have to buy video from iTunes," said Mr. Breen half-jokingly when a lecture attendee said he hadn't been able to get a straight answer about how to play non-iTunes video on his iPod.

But Mr. Breen made sure people wouldn't act illegally.

"The law says you can copy what you legally own" and keep it for personal use, said Mr. Breen. "It's not OK to rip a DVD and give it to all your friends."

To play home movies or other self-created content, Mr. Breen suggested Podner, which costs \$10. To copy DVDs that a user has purchased, he recommended the free and open-source application HandBrake, which can be found on web sites like VersionTracker and MacUpdate.

The \$30 QuickTime Pro 7 from Apple, however, trades ease of use for lack of speed. "[Copying] a full-length movie is an all-night affair," lamented Mr. Breen.

He added that there's no telling how long HandBrake will be available at no charge. "Get it now," he urged his audience.

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