



All the cool stuff in one place

Posted by: Steve Hamm on February 18, 2005

It seems awfully late in the hype cycle for a promising new dot-com to appear on the scene, but that's just what is happening with a Silicon Valley company with one of those too-cute startup names—[imeem](#). What imeem does is bundle instant messaging, blogging, photo and music sharing, and social networking together in one desktop application that connects via peer-to-peer networking to the Web. It's like AOL, Napster, Friendster, and the blogosphere all wrapped into one package. Cool. I wish I was a kid again or, at least, an adult with more free time on my hands.

The other cool thing about imeem for parents, especially is that it's a bit of a walled garden for cyberspace exploration. Millions of absolute strangers won't be illegally downloading music from the family PC in the dead of night. And your kids meet other kids mainly through people they already know. If somebody wants to make contact with somebody else and share stuff, they have to ask permission. It's not completely safe. I have a feeling you can blow past seven degrees of separation pretty fast. But at least there are some brakes on this buggy.

I got a guided tour of imeem from Ted Malone, the VP of marketing. It's pretty easy to use. You begin with IM, building a buddy list on the left hand side of the screen showing pictures of your buddies, their status, etc. You can click next to your friends and see THEIR buddy lists, and look at stuff that these people have posted about themselves, and, if you want, ask their permission to link with them. You set up or join groups call "meems" (Don't ask me why) that are broader than your buddy list and are really chat groups built around specific interests or themes say fast cars or hip-hop stars. You can discover people with common interests and link directly with them. Then there's the blogging. Imeem calls this "personal journals." You create a journal and decide whether to post it on the Web or just on imeem. Stuff-sharing is pretty simple, too. You set up folders with photos, videos, and music in them and specify how you want to share them. "It's like a virtual private network for consumers. You and your friends can connect in a safe way," says Malone.

Will it work as a business? I have no clue. The software download is free. Malone says the revenue source will be money from "subtle" targeted ads triggered by the content of

communications and the stuff that's being shared. It seems likely Malone and his pals will be able to build up a large audience for their advertisers pretty quick since this thing will likely spread like a virus.

My kid is heading off to college next year, so imeem seems like a great way for him to keep in touch with his high school pals and even his parents. Pretty soon, maybe, we'll all be asking each other, "Do you imeem?" It may sound ridiculous, but it will be a lot of fun.