

Online storage company Evernote sets conference

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Though Phil Libin, chief executive officer of Evernote Corp., always hoped his company would become a platform, he said he has been reluctant to talk about it until recently.

Evernote, the Mountain View startup that stores memories digitally, will bring users together in San Francisco next month for what it hopes will be a conference to remember.

The first Evernote Trunk Conference, or ETC, marks a strategic step for a company transforming itself from a popular "freemium" service into a platform that partners use to sell services of their own. And while ETC will start small, limited to about 200 attendees, executives say they are modeling it on similar conferences organized by technology giants Apple, Google and Facebook.

"We've been thinking about doing it for a while, and we felt like we finally had enough of a critical mass to make something that would be entertaining and useful for people," said Phil Libin, CEO of the 4-year-old company.

Keynote speakers include Gordon Bell, a computer scientist and researcher at Microsoft who is leading an experiment in "life logging," or attempting to create a digital storehouse of everything a person reads, sees and hears in a lifetime. Other speakers include Timothy Ferriss, who used Evernote to help write his book "The 4-Hour Body," and Guy Kawasaki, the investor and former chief evangelist for Apple.

Evernote allows people to store notes, photos, PDFs and anything else they would like to remember in online notebooks that are synchronized and made accessible on any device with an Internet connection. The vast majority of customers use the service for free, and the company generates revenue from the small percentage who pay for enhanced features.

Fueled by ease of use and its availability on every major desktop and mobile platform, Evernote is growing at a rapid clip: the company added more than a million users in the last 30 days, and now claims a global reach of more than 11 million people.

In turn, the large audience has drawn other developers: third parties whose applications harness Evernote to build to-do lists, store scanned documents and share photos online. About 6,000 developers have requested access to the service, and partners have released more than 500 products that integrate with Evernote to date.

The goal of ETC is to encourage more such products and help developers create them more easily. It will also be a forum on how to use the service more effectively.

In an effort to spur the creation of new apps, the company has also announced its first \$100,000 developer competition. The grand prize is \$50,000, and there will also be prizes for six finalists and a student developer.

Evernote also promises to announce new products at the event and talk about its roadmap for future releases.

While Libin always hoped his company would become a platform, he said, he has been reluctant to talk about it until recently.

"We're just getting comfortable with that idea," he said. "Every two-person startup says, 'We're building a platform.' It doesn't sound credible until you have 10 million users, a few hundred partners. It's the sort of thing where you're better off having other people refer to you as a platform."

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