



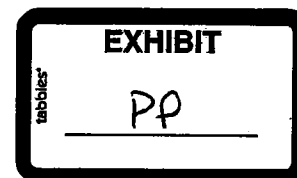
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Prefound.com to wed social networks, search

The company plans to host a Kentucky Derby event it hopes will help build a critical mass of users for its search engine by leveraging popular social networks

By Elizabeth Montalbano, IDG News Service

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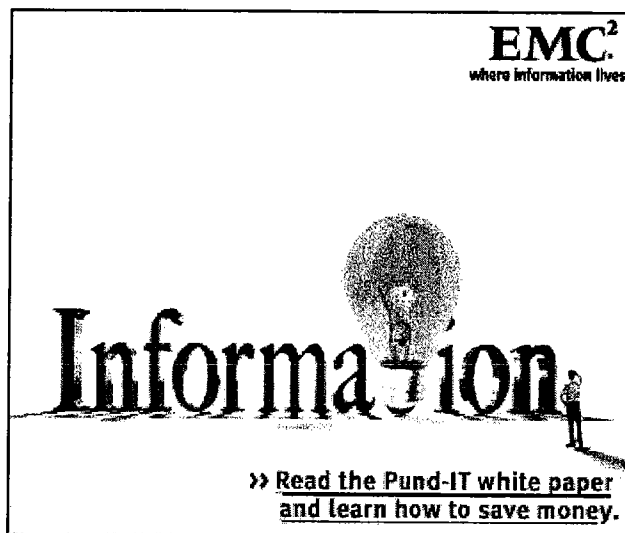


The state of Kentucky is not known as a bastion of high-tech innovation. But Lexington-based Prefound.com hopes to use its home state's most popular sporting event to promote what Chief Executive Officer Steve Mansfield thinks is the next evolution of online searching -- the merging of search engines and social networks.

Prefound.com plans to host an event at the Kentucky Derby thoroughbred race it hopes will help build a critical mass of users for its search engine by leveraging social networks such as MySpace, LiveJournal and Friendster, Mansfield said.

"We think that it's a strong possibility that if you extend the power and the numbers of the people who are strong participants of social networks and extend that into pure search, then you're going to have a very important and significant search structure," he said.

Prefound.com will hold a two-day meeting Friday and Saturday, May 5-6, during which its founders and the founders of social network LiveJournal, as well as members of the press, will discuss how to combine search engines with social networks, Mansfield said. The author of the Search Engine Lowdown news site, Garrett French, is scheduled to moderate a round table at the event on Friday. (<http://www.searchenginelowdown.com>) The meeting also will include attendance at the Kentucky Derby race on Saturday.



Mansfield said he hopes to use the event to find out how Prefound.com can partner with social networking companies to participate in the sharing of information and search links, and if there is a better, more formal way for the companies to unite their user networks.

Prefound.com already bases its results primarily on links to results from searches its network of registered users -- which it

calls "finders" -- already have found, Mansfield said. If the average user visits the Prefound.com Web site and searches for a topic, the links that turn up are those that have already been visited and logged by Prefound finders, he said.

Many of those finders are researchers in certain fields of study and some of them are brought into the Prefound.com network as "featured finders," Mansfield said. Featured finders are people who are experts in certain areas -- for example, a minor-league baseball player who posts links about baseball -- and are expected to know how to search the Web for material on certain topics that the average user might not find, he said.

To reward its featured finders, of which there are only about 10 at this time, Prefound.com pays its featured finders 100 percent of advertising revenue it makes from the links on their personal profile page, Mansfield said. Prefound.com's main source of revenue is from advertising.

Because general users of Prefound.com who don't register on as finders must trust the search results that Prefound.com members and featured finders provide, it's important the company lure as many people as possible to join its site and post links to useful information on the Web, Mansfield said. This is why he thinks linking up with social networks is important to the future success of Prefound.com, he said.

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