Beat: Technology

Google to shut down social network Orkut in September

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USPA News - Social networking website Orkut, which at one point was one of the most visited websites in India and Brazil, will be shutting down at the end of September, internet giant Google announced on Monday, saying it intends to focus on its other services. Paulo Golgher, the website`s engineering director, described Orkut as Google`s first foray into social networking.

The website was the brainchild of Turkish software engineer Orkut Büyükkökten who built it in 2004 as part of Google`s 20 percent project that allows employees to use a fifth of their time at work on ideas not necessarily related to their job responsibilities. "Orkut communities started conversations and forged connections that had never existed before. Orkut helped shape life online before people really knew what `social networking` was," Golgher said. But because other social networking websites have since outpaced Orkut`s growth, Google decided to shut it down on September 30. Golgher said current users of Orkut will not be impacted until September 30th to give them time to transition to another social networking website, though it is no longer possible to create a new Orkut account. "People can export their profile data, community posts and photos using Google Takeout," he said. The internet giant declined to say how many users are still active on Orkut, but the website boasted more than 100 million users as recently as 2011. Orkut proved particularly successful in India and Brazil at a time when MySpace reigned as the world`s most popular social networking website. "It used to be very popular in India. Orkut was basically as popular as Facebook is currently," said software engineer Sajal Kayan, who is originally from India. "I could login and expect like 90 percent of my classmates to be on Orkut, but I guess all of them transitioned to Facebook over time." For those who remain fond of Orkut, Golgher said Google intends to preserve an online archive of all public communities after the service shuts down at the end of September. "It`s been a great 10 years, and we apologize to those still actively using the service. We hope people will find other online communities to spark more conversations and build even more connections for the next decade and beyond," he said. With the closure of Orkut, Google said it intends to focus on its other services including Blogger, video-sharing website YouTube, and the company`s latest social networking website, Google+. "We`ll be focusing our energy and resources on making these other social platforms as amazing as possible for everyone who uses them," Golgher said.

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