

## Mobile Social Provider airG is Calling

by Anne Sherber

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For most marketers, airG could be the largest mobile social network you've never heard of.

Though it may seem like social network lite by Facebook standards (and what social networking site doesn't?) airG, a privately-held, Vancouver-based, mobile social network available to users in 40 countries, is the most widely available mobile social network in the world. The site has just passed the 55 million unique users mark and more than one million new users are logging on each month, according to Vincent Yen, the company's CEO and co-founder.

Even more impressive than the total number of users is the loyalty those users demonstrate. According to airG's research, the site, which offers users a mix of features, including the ability to update status, photo and video sharing, games, and instant messaging, is very sticky. During 2010, the average airG user spent more than 77 minutes each day on the site, with the overall community generating more than 7.9 billion minutes of use.

According to Yen, airG is the "predominant way our users access the Internet." Although most of the site's users still use feature phones, Yen sees that changing. "We are 10 years old," he says. "A lot of our legacy users access us on their original devices. But users who have joined in the last year are accessing the site from smart phones."

Although the site does accept advertising, its primary revenue source is what Yen calls "premium mobile transactions." He says that access to the site is free but that users pay for additional services, including games and apps. He says that airG has the ability to bill directly to customers' mobile devices for use of the site's paid content.

The company is just wrapping up its "Whip'd for the Winter" sweepstakes. Sponsored by Boost Mobile, Virgin Mobile and Def Jam records, the promotion ran between December 1, 2010 and January 31, 2011, and was promoted by Def Jam Records artist Jeremiah. The contest winner, who will receive a customized 2011 Mustang GT Coupe, will be drawn on February 15.

According to Yen, the promotion illustrates airG's ability to target mobile users with relevant and valuable promotions and sweepstakes, based on their demographics and interests. He says it's not the first time the site has given cars away. In previous sweepstakes, site users have won a Cooper Mini, a Ford Focus and a Mustang.

Most of the site's users are located in North America, says Yen. But the site has active communities in Latin America, Europe and Australia. And, he says, the site has a growing presence in the Middle East and Africa. Yen says users range in age from 18 to 55 and are split equally between men and women.