



AirG Launches Latin Social Net

Wireless company aims to expand mobile network to Spanish, French, and other languages.

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AirG opened a social network Friday aimed at the cell phones of Spanish-speaking young people in the United States, Conexion Latina.

The Vancouver, Canada-based company has previously opened a French-speaking social network as well, known as Salon Bleu, and it plans to expand to other languages such as German and other demographic groups as well. AirG is on the Red Herring 100 list of top North American wireless companies (see [RH 100 N.A. Wireless](#)).

The company operates across multiple wireless carriers in the U.S., including Sprint Nextel, Cingular Wireless, and Boost Mobile. AirG said Friday it has signed up more than 10 million users since it began operating its mobile social network in 2000.

The company already operates a Latino community as part of its CoolTalk service with Cingular (see [Cingular Pushes Wireless Data](#)).

Social networking has become a hot phenomenon with sites like MySpace.com and Facebook signing up millions of users over the web.

Those same web-based social networks have also been expanding to mobile phones, as with MySpace's deal with Helio and Facebook's with Verizon Wireless, Sprint, and Cingular (see [Helio, MySpace Link Youth](#) and [Facebook Adds Mobile Internet](#)).

However, AirG co-founder Frederick Ghahramani said he sees more competition from purely wireless social networks, particularly Jumbuck, Freever, and Intercasting's Rabble service.

Other competitors in the mobile social network space include flipt, WaveMarket's StreetHive, and an early entrant, Upoc.

Tattoo Chats

Each user on AirG has a personal profile containing their photo, demographic details, and blog. Users can instant message each other and go into chat rooms with multiple users to instant-message about subjects like tattoos, their local geographic area like California or New York, and other topics.

By polling its user base, AirG discovered that over 1.2 million of its users were self-identified as Latinos.

"That was pretty eye-opening for us because it's indexing higher than the U.S. average," said Mr. Ghahramani. "The idea was to demonstrate how you could build a unique social network on phones around a specific topic or brand."

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—Frederick Ghahramani, AirG

The company decided to build Conexion Latina and is promoting the network with a contest, giving away a Mini Cooper car to a winner who uses the service before December. The Mini Cooper will be custom-painted in the flag colors of a country chosen by the winner.

AirG has also been expanding in Australia and recently launched five separate micro-communities around music, sports, games, alternative lifestyles, and friends.

The privately held company has about 100 employees and is angel funded. AirG has also been signing up to partner with other large companies besides the carriers. The company has a deal in place with MTV in Asia and is in discussions with MTV about partnering in the United States as well. It also has done promotions for Schick, Jeep, and Dunkin' Donuts.

<http://www.redherring.com/Article.aspx?a=18182&hed=AirG+Launches+Latin+Social+Net>