



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on June 20, 2011

## Facebook to Launch Its Own iPad App

Facebook for iPhone is the most-downloaded iPhone app ever, but more than a year after Apple introduced the iPad, there is still a notable lack of an official Facebook app for the device. However, it's rumored that Facebook is preparing to change that.

Nick Bilton of *The New York Times* [says](#) that Facebook had its application for the iPhone ready right when the Apple App Store opened in July 2008. But more than a year after the iPad went on sale, the Facebook app is still to materialize.

However, that is about to change. People briefed on Facebook's plans say that in coming weeks the company will introduce a free iPad application that has been carefully designed and optimized for the tablet.



The app has been in production at Facebook for almost a year, going through several design iterations, and is now in the final stages of testing, according to these people, who declined to be named because they were discussing confidential product plans.

One person who works with Facebook said Mark Zuckerberg, the company's chief executive and founder, has been heavily invested in the process, overseeing design decisions and the app's unique features.

People who have seen the application say it has a slick design that has been tailored for the iPad and its touch screen interface. Facebook developers and designers have also overhauled the Facebook Chat and Facebook Groups features for the application. And the app will go beyond the features available on the Facebook website by allowing users to shoot and upload photos and videos directly from the iPad's built-in cameras.

"The photo and video experience is amazing, offering full resolution and full-screen images," notes a person who has seen the app.

Jaime Schopflin, a communications manager at Facebook, declined to discuss any future products. "We have a great relationship with Apple that is exemplified by our iPhone application, but with regards to an iPad application we have nothing to announce now, and cannot comment on future Facebook products," she said. Apple also declined to comment.

Facebook's users have complained in the past that its web interface is not optimized for the iPad or any other touch-screen experience. In response, a number of outside developers have introduced Facebook-friendly applications for the iPad, including My Pad, iFace and Friendly. Yet, Facebook actively recruited numerous desktop software developers before it even had an iPad app.

The new app could be a boon to both Facebook and Apple. Mobile applications and optimized mobile websites have been a major area of growth for Facebook, with the company reporting that there are



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now more than 250 million Facebook users actively accessing the service on a mobile device. Facebook is approaching 700 million users worldwide.

A compelling Facebook application for the iPad could help Apple woo customers who are torn between buying an iPad and a competing Google Android tablet. Apple has sold more than 25 million iPads since the device was introduced last year.

Apple also plans to help Facebook promote the new application by featuring it prominently in the App Store, according to a person familiar with the plans for the app. In addition to the iPad app, Facebook will also introduce a better version of its website for the iPad. It is unclear when this will be unveiled, but it is not intended to compete with a Facebook iPad or iPhone application, and instead is meant “to supplement these experiences,” this person said.

Facebook’s effort to challenge Apple on its own turf essentially constitutes a covert corporate strategy, which tech gurus and analysts are dubbing “Project Spartan” — the code name for a new platform Facebook is on verge of launching. It’s entirely HTML5-based and the aim is to reach some 100 million users in a key place: mobile. More specifically, the initial target is both surprising and awesome: mobile Safari. The app will not be available through Apple stores, as Facebook seeks to control all aspects of the process, and with nearly 700 million users, it is certainly in the position to challenge the almighty App Store distribution mechanism. But it needs to be able to do so on Apple’s devices, which make up a key chunk of the market.

According to [M.G. Siegler](#), an analyst with TechCrunch:

[T]here are believed to be 80 or so outside developers working with Facebook on Project Spartan. These teams are working on apps for the platform that range from games to news-reading apps. Some of the names should be familiar: Zynga and Huffington Post, for example. The goal is to have these apps ready to roll in the next few weeks for a formal unveiling shortly thereafter. Work has been going on for at least a couple of months, with Facebook putting in a lot of work before that. So some of the apps may not be fully polished at launch. It may be more of a “look what we can do” type thing.

Reached for comment on the matter, Facebook said they had “nothing to share.” But we don’t need their confirmation. Why? Because I’ve seen Project Spartan with my own eyes. Imagine loading up the mobile web version of Facebook and finding a drop-down for a new type of app. Clicking on one of the apps loads it (from whatever server it’s on depending on the app-maker), and immediately a Facebook wrapper is brought in to surround the app. This wrapper will give the app some basic Facebook functionality, as well as the ability to use key Facebook elements — like Credits.

The announcement bodes well for Facebook and its patrons. With some projecting that Apple will sell as many as 45 million Apple iPads this year, many analysts believe Facebook is wise to take advantage of this burgeoning technological modality. Facebook can actually innovate in the space. Just as Twitter pushed new ideas forward with its iPad app (which pointed towards the work it would eventually unveil for New Twitter), Facebook can play around with new types of touch interfaces and interactions on the platform.



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