

Facebook Finds Middle Ground with New Home App

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Rumors of a Facebook phone were brought to a head with today's much-hyped announcement from the social network. The results fall somewhere between a piece of hardware for Facebook to call its own and an actual operating system.

Facebook today unveiled a new approach to Google's Android operating system with a suite of apps that focus on more deeply integrating the social network on smartphones.

The new apps fall under the umbrella of Facebook Home, an app that can be downloaded from Google Play on an initial select handful of Android devices.

"We wanted this to feel like system software and not just an app that you run," CEO Mark Zuckerberg said during a launch presentation that was broadcast on the company's website.

The full suite of apps result in a messaging hub centered around Facebook that also acts as a homescreen for the device.

Specifically, "Cover Feed" acts as a constant, fresh stream of photos and updates directly from a user's news feed and is always present on the phone's lock screen. Facebook also showcased something called "Chat Heads," a mobile messenger that lets users jump in and out of conversations while multitasking in other apps.

The company also took the wraps off a new HTC smartphone that was optimized for Facebook Home. Called the HTC First, the new LTE-enabled phone will be available for \$99 exclusively on AT&T starting April 12, with preorders starting today.

Investors, which have long worried about how Facebook will monetize mobile, liked what they saw. Shares of Facebook were up over 3 percent to \$27.11 immediately following the announcement.

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<http://www.wirelessweek.com/news/2013/04/facebook-finds-middle-ground-new-home-app>