Has Facebook Found Its Next Instagram?

Facebook [1]may have found its next big acquisition.

The social networking company is said to be interested in buying WhatsApp, a popular mobile messaging service for iPhones, Androids and other smartphones, according to a recent report in TechCrunch *[2]* citing "sources close to the matter."

WhatsApp, which lets users send messages across various smartphone platforms for free, was founded in 2009 and recently announced that it now delivers 10 billion messages each day. *TechCrunch* reports hearing that the company has "tens of millions" of daily active users in more than 100 countries.

For Facebook, WhatsApp may pose an opportunity to gain a foothold in new countries and, just as importantly, to cement its presence on mobile. Facebook has already tried to insert itself into the smartphone messaging experience with its Messenger app with mixed results. Owning an already successful messaging service could help Facebook whether it wants to build its own phone one day or simply dominate the experience of the phones that are currently on the market.

While the potential for WhatsApp to help Facebook's business may be comparable to Instagram, it seems unlikely that it would command as high an acquisition price.

Facebook paid $1 billion to acquire Instagram [3], though the actual value of the offer dropped with Facebook's declining stock price. Instagram, however, had just closed a $50 million round [4] of funding at a $500 million just before being acquired. By comparison, WhatsApp most recently raised an $8 million round last year at an unknown valuation.

TechCrunch did not cite a possible price range for the acquisition.

In response to a request for comment, a Facebook rep said only that, "We don't comment on rumors or speculation." WhatsApp did not immediately respond to our request for comment.

UPDATE: A rep from WhatsApp has responded to *Mashable* about the acquisition rumor, calling it "not factually accurate."

"The reported story is a rumor and not factually accurate," the rep said. "We have no further information to share at the moment."

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