Yahoo CEO Plans to Prune Company's Mobile Apps

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SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer thinks the Internet company will be able to please more people with fewer smartphone applications.

Mayer told an audience of investors during a Tuesday presentation that she thinks Yahoo will be better served with just 12 to 15 mobile applications, down from a "scattered" portfolio of as many as 75 different programs in recent years.

Offering so many different mobile applications has proven too overwhelming for Yahoo's 200 million mobile users, Mayer said. By jettisoning some mobile applications and combining some elements in the same program, Mayer is betting Yahoo's services will become more deeply ingrained as daily habits that will "delight and inspire" users.

"We don't want to overload people by expecting them to download too many distinct, individual apps," Mayer said. Without saying so directly, she indicated that Yahoo is likely to concentrate its mobile apps on finance, sports, email, weather, entertainment, news and video.

Her remarks came during her first appearance at an investment conference since she ended her 13-year career as a top Google Inc. executive to become Yahoo's CEO seven months ago. Mayer, 37, mostly stuck to themes she has mentioned in previous conference calls with analysts to discuss Yahoo's quarterly earnings. She has consistently stressed that Yahoo needs to come up with a better mobile strategy and hire more engineers specializing in applications for smartphones and tablet computers, to accelerate the company's growth.

Yahoo Inc., based in Sunnyvale, Calif., was stuck in a financial funk that caused its stock price to steadily sink until Mayer's arrival. The shares have surged by 36 percent since Mayer became CEO and, on Tuesday, touched their highest level in more than four-and-half years in a show of Wall Street faith in Mayer. The stock closed at $21.21 Tuesday, up 31 cents.

Yahoo picked up more mobile engineering expertise Tuesday with the acquisition of Alike, the maker of an app that helps people find nearby restaurants and other places that they might enjoy. It's the fourth small deal that Mayer has pulled off as Yahoo's CEO. All of the acquisitions have been of startups staffed by a group of employees that Mayer wanted to add to Yahoo's workforce.

"We have to augment the engineering talent we already have and build more," she said.

Mayer also assured investors that she is setting quarterly goals that all employees will be expected to meet as Yahoo tries to build upon a 2 percent increase in net revenue last year.

Although paltry, the gain ended a three-year slump in Yahoo's annual revenue.

"We grade ourselves as honestly and as brutally as we can," Mayer said.

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