

New bug prompts earlier end to Google+ social network

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The Google+ social network will close in April 2019

Google said Monday it will close the consumer version of its online social network sooner than originally planned due to the discovery of a new software bug.

The Google+ social network will close in April—four months earlier than planned—and the internet giant will focus on operating a version tailored for businesses, according to G Suite product management vice president David Thacker.

Application programming interface programs (APIs) used by developers to access Google+ data will be shut down within 90 days, according to Thacker.

"With the discovery of this new bug, we have decided to expedite the shut-down of all Google+ APIs," Thacker said in a blog post.

"While we recognize there are implications for developers, we want to ensure the protection of our users."

A new bug introduced via a software update in November was discovered during routine testing and fixed, according to the company.

Google determined that the vulnerability affected approximately 52.5 million users, allowing applications to see profile information such as name, occupation, age and email address even if access was set to private.

"No third party compromised our systems, and we have no evidence that the app developers that inadvertently had this access for six days were aware of it or misused it in any way," Thacker said.

In October, Google announced plans to shut down the social network after fixing a bug exposing private data in as many as 500,000 accounts.

A security audit had revealed a software bug that gave third-party apps access to Google+ private profile data people meant to share only with friends.

The data involved was limited to optional profile fields, including name, age, gender, occupation and [email address](#), Google said.

There was no evidence found at the time that developers had taken advantage of the bug, according to Google.

Google+ failed to gain meaningful traction after being launched in 2011 as a challenge to Facebook.

A Google spokesperson cited "significant challenges in creating and maintaining a successful Google+ that meets consumers' expectations" along with "very low usage" as reasons for pulling the plug.

The social network allows users to download and share data such as pictures and videos.

Meanwhile, Google planned to add new workplace-oriented features to enhance the appeal of Google+ as a "secure corporate social [network](#)" to be used inside business operations.

"Our review showed that Google+ is better suited as an enterprise product where co-workers can engage in internal discussions," the California-based internet firm said.

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