

Facebook takes on Google with open data centres

by Emma Barnett via stele - Telegraph UK *Friday, Apr 8 2011, 11:51am*

international / mass media / other press

Anything is better than Google

In stark contrast to Google, which keeps the location and any other details about its servers secret at all times, Facebook has taken an open-source approach and is allowing developers full access to the workings of the vast halls of computers behind the site.

In exchange for allowing developers the chance to see and mimic Facebook's servers, the social networking site should be able to benefit from a larger eco-system of programmers and engineers to improve its own operations - without hiring any more staff.

"By releasing Open Compute Project technologies as open hardware, our goal is to develop servers and data centres following the model traditionally associated with open source software projects. Our first step is releasing the specifications and mechanical drawings. The second step is working with the community to improve them," explained a Facebook employee.

According to technology site, ars technica, Facebook has opened up a whole new front in its war with Google over top technical talent and ad dollars.

Jon Stokes, a writer for the site, said: "Instead of simply hiring away Google engineers, the social networking service is now aiming to do for its datacentres what Google is doing with Android—that is, it's taking an open-source approach that will let the company harness the energy and know-how of a larger ecosystem of programmers and engineers to make its ad business that much more profitable.

"Facebook has framed the announcement as part of its commitment to openness, but there are much larger forces at work, here. Specifically, despite what most people think, Facebook and Google are hardware companies, and the former's open-source datacentre will potentially help it compete in the datacentre arena with its much larger and deeper-pocketed rival."

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