

Merger planned by Gay.Com and PlanetOut

Two largest GLBT online providers agree to join forces

by Shev Rush
Special to Q-Notes

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — PlanetOut Corporation and Gay.com's parent company Online Partners, the two leading providers of online content and services for the GLBT community, announced on November 17 that they

will merge. The merger will create a global media and services company that immediately reaches more than 3.5 million individuals a month and counts more than 1.6 million registered users.

The two companies plan to operate under the name PlanetOut

Partners, Inc., maintaining the popular Gay.com and PlanetOut consumer brands and web sites. The merger of the two privately-held companies should be completed by year-end, pending legal and shareholder approvals.

"The gay and lesbian community will be the winner in this merger because, for the first time, the LGBT market becomes a true economic force," said Lowell Selvin, chief executive officer of Online Partners. "Never before could any organization bring together this many gays and lesbians to command the attention of businesses worldwide."

"Both PlanetOut and Gay.com share a common goal: to deliver the best products and services for gay and lesbian people wherever they are in the world," said Megan Smith, chief executive officer of PlanetOut. "With the two largest brands under one umbrella, we can aggregate resources and serve our customers even more effectively."

Selvin will serve as chief executive officer of PlanetOut Partners. Smith will take the role of president, and both Smith and Selvin will serve on the board of directors. The board will include six other directors, three from each of the Gay.com and PlanetOut boards. PlanetOut Partners, Inc. will be headquartered in San Francisco.

"The combination of Gay.com and PlanetOut creates a powerhouse media company with tremendous reach within the lesbian and gay community," said David Bohnett, chairman of the board of Online Partners. "This merger gives our advertisers and sponsors the opportunity to deliver their message to a highly targeted and demographically attractive audience across multiple brands."

The Gay.com network is a highly popular set of Internet communities whose users stay online and return more often than those of other leading sites. Gay.com provides products and services including ISP, news, search, shopping, chat, message boards, email, and twelve original content channels to 2.7 million unique gay and lesbian consumers each month and 850,000 registered members. Additionally, Gay.com syndicates content and services to more than 3,000 affiliates. PlanetOut, for its part, attracts more than 1.7 million unique visitors per month and more than 850,000 registered users with community and original content products such as its PopcornQ gay and lesbian film channel, news, entertainment, travel, money and careers, shopping, directories, free e-mail and the Internet's most popular online personals service for LGBT people.

By combining Gay.com and PlanetOut into a single force, PlanetOut Partners will offer businesses the broadest access ever to the gay and lesbian market, estimated to have \$450 billion in buying power, according to research firm Overlooked Opinions. In turn, gays and lesbians will gain greater access to products and services specifically targeted to their needs, as businesses see the opportunity to reach this traditionally under-served market. ▼





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