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With more growth planned, Facebook doubling its space in Austin



Mark Matson/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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Facebook's Austin operation is expanding into another floor of its downtown building. The new space will have Facebook's signature unfinished look, symbolic of its attitude that it is always building.



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Facebook employees Christy Cooper, left, and Jeanine Henry say that they love Austin and that it is a good fit for the company.



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Facebook commissioned a local artist to produce this work in an office hallway. The industrial look is a key feature of Facebook offices.

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By Kirk Ladendorf

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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Less than a year and a half after it opened an Austin satellite office, Facebook Inc. is doubling its space here.

On Friday, the world's largest social media network will move into a second floor at its high-rise offices at 300 W. Sixth St. The move will enable the company to potentially double its local employment of about 150 people. The company gave no time frame for that additional hiring.

The growth in Austin mirrors the worldwide growth for Facebook, which has more than 2,000 workers globally and is moving its headquarters to a 57-acre complex in Menlo Park, Calif. It's also expanding its international operations in Dublin and Hyderabad, India.

Austin is home to the company's largest U.S. operation outside of its headquarters. Its work here is focused on sales and operations support for parts of the Facebook network, which serves 800 million people worldwide — about 75 percent of them are based outside the United States.

Analysts say the 7-year-old privately owned company is on track to take in \$4 billion in revenue this year. Although there is speculation that the company will go public with a stock offering next year, analyst Rob Enderle with the Enderle Group said there is not much investor enthusiasm right now.

"Right now the bloom is off the rose for social networks," Enderle said. "They also probably don't want the oversight (that comes) with being a public company."

Sarah Smith, Facebook's director of online operations in Austin, said the expansion is an indication of how highly management regards the Austin operation, which is just more than a year old.

"We are constantly pushing people to solve problems in new ways," Smith said. "Everyone goes back to headquarters raving about the work we have done here. Austin has been a runaway success."

The company's sales team will move into the new, expanded space, one floor up from the existing operation.

The new space looks like the existing space with a few extra touches, including Lego boards and pegboards on some of the walls to help workers customize their areas. Like Facebook offices everywhere, it will have an unfinished look, with plenty of exposed concrete floors and painted-over plywood walls.

That unfinished look is a key part of the company's message to employees.

"We are not done yet," Smith said. "We are still building. We are

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constantly building."

More than likely, Facebook will decorate the new space with company slogans that emphasize its culture of moving fast and trying new things. Those slogans include: "Proceed and be bold," "Done is better than perfect," "Can't is the cancer of now," "The foolish wait," "Move fast and break things" and "Fail harder."

Part of the Austin team's responsibility is helping the company deal with its fast-growing base of users and having them resolve problems quickly.

And the sales team here is finding new companies that want to tap into the marketing potential of the company's social network.

Christy Cooper, who worked in Silicon Valley for Yahoo and Salesforce.com, now works on the marketing team building stronger ties to major pharmaceutical companies that are looking for ways to reach the Facebook audience.

"This is the perfect role with the perfect company in the perfect town," she said. "There is so much opportunity to create new, exciting areas within the company. There is so much opportunity for me personally as well as where the company is going to go."

She joined the company in January and already considers herself a veteran.

Jeanine Henry joined the company in August after getting a master's degree from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. She had worked for a tech startup in California after getting a bachelor's degree from Stanford University.

She is a manager on the operations team that supports how small businesses use the company's pages product platform as a way to market themselves.

"My job involves supporting all the people that use the pages product as a way to get out their message. If they have problems or if they are stuck somewhere in the process, my team is there to answer their questions and to be their voice into the engineering and product team."

Henry joined in the middle of Austin's hottest summer on record. Luckily, she likes the heat.

"I love the (San Francisco) Bay area, but I just like the heat of Texas," she said. "It is kind of like the Bay is here. It is an active city, and there is great food and music and culture and a lot of really bright and interesting people."

"I feel so lucky to have the opportunity to come here. I love coming to work every day."

Facebook's website lists 10 job openings in Austin for positions that include finance, online sales operations, payment operations and recruiting.

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