

Mail.ru Turns Microblogger With Futubra

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — Internet company Mail.ru has launched its answer to U.S. microblogging site Twitter, seeking to expand its business into instant social messaging and emulate the success of China's Weibo.

London-listed Mail.ru said the new Futubra service was part of its strategy to move into microblogging, hoping to capitalize on the fast-growing social media subsector.

The launch of Futubra, a Russian-language site that allows users to send short messages, videos and photos to its other users, attracted 17,000 users within the first 24 hours of its launch, RIA-Novosti reported.

"We are excited by the opportunity facing Futubra, as microblogging is a fast-growing segment that fits well into the Mail.ru Group vision of the growth in Internet communications," Dmitry Grishin, Mail.ru Group chief executive, said in a statement.

Mail.ru raised about \$1 billion in a blockbuster initial public offering in London in November

2010, the second-biggest Russian IPO since the financial crisis behind fellow Internet group Yandex.

Social media startups have been popular with investors as the number of Internet users hungry for quick information has continued to grow while Russia became Europe's second-largest Internet market in terms of user numbers last year.

Mail.ru hopes to emulate the success of China's Weibo and Twitter.

Twitter said in September that it had more than 100 million active users from 200 million registered accounts just five years after its launch.

In China the use of microblogging quadrupled in 2011, while the total number of Weibo users rose 296 percent over the year to 249.9 million, half the country's total Internet population, according to data from the China Internet Network Information Center.

Mail.ru owns two Russian social networks, Moi Mir@Mail.ru and Odnoklassniki.ru, and owns a significant share of the social network Vkontakte — the country's largest social media platform and domestic answer to Facebook.

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