URL Shortening Company TR.IM Goes Kaput

Editor's Note: This brings up yet another issue: How how do you monetize a popular Website and/or service?

(newsfactor.com [1]) Failing to find a larger company to acquire it, Nambu Network will shut down its link shortening service. Tr.im has thousands of users and creates tens of thousands of URLs per day for social media users.

Like tinyurl, bit.ly [2] and many other free services, tr.im converts a conventional URL to a shorter URL that redirects users to the original page. Link shortening services have been especially popular on Twitter. With a 140-character limit, URL shorteners make it more practical for members to share Web content with each other on the micro-blogging service.

"We regret that it came to this, but all of our efforts to avoid it failed," Nambu Network said on its home page. "No business we approached wanted to purchase tr.im for even a minor amount."

Nambu Blames Twitter

Nambu said all tr.im links will continue to redirect until at least the end of 2009. If no company steps up to buy tr.im, those links could eventually lead users to nowhere.

"There is no way for us to monetize URL shortening -- users won't pay for it -- and we just can't justify further development since Twitter has all but anointed bit.ly the market winner," the company wrote. "There is simply no point for us to continue operating tr.im, and pay for its upkeep."

The company was especially critical of Twitter and companies that feed off of it to provide services. Nambu claims tr.im gets hit by countless bots every day farming its data to create and operate companies that allow users to search and retweet the hottest stories on Twitter, such as Tweetmeme.

"Twitter has all but sapped us of any last energy to double-down and develop tr.im further. What is the point? With bit.ly the Twitter default, and with us having no inside connection to Twitter, tr.im will lose over the long-run no matter how good it may or may not be at this moment, or in the future," the company said.

Thousands of Dead Links

Politically, the Internet will continue to see casualties like tr.im, according to Brad

Shimmin, an analyst at Current Analysis. He said he is surprised that companies like Twitter haven't developed their own shortening schemes or just acquired leading companies in the space.

"Maybe that's a sign of immaturity in the industry or a call for maturity in this portion of the industry," Shimmin. "Because of tr.im shutting its doors, we'll probably see more stability in terms of some sort of backing for these companies."

Shimmin expects the cry for stability to grow louder. URL shorteners are a weak link, he said. With third-party involvement in redirecting users through shortened links to the original pages, there is always a danger of losing reference to the original page if the company goes out of business or has a server failure.

"When you have a third-party involved and they shut their doors like tr.im just did, how many pages are going nowhere?" Shimmin asks. "It may seem like these URLs are scrolling off your Twitter screen but they are still being archived and indexed on search engines. So they are a permanent part of your Internet record."

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http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2009/08/url-shortening-company-trim-goes-kaput

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