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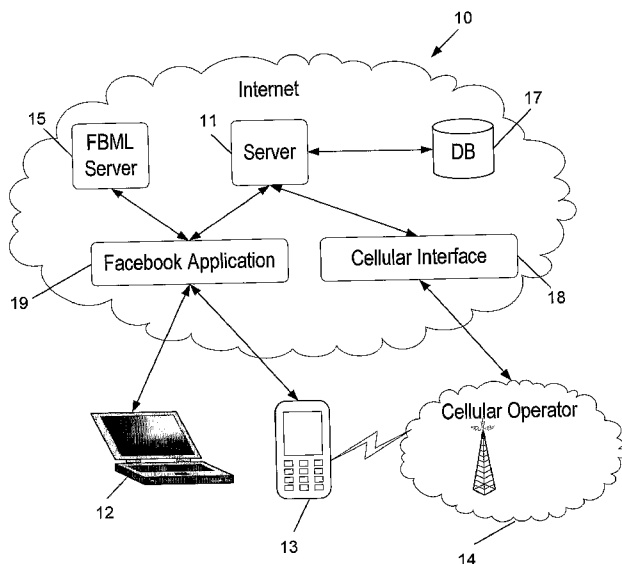


Fig. 3

(57) **Abstract:** A system and method for allowing searching and evaluating different kinds of information (e.g. a reliable worthy service provider) based on the user's connections on a social network in which the user is a member and based on recommendations and endorsements concerning the sought information (e.g. a reliable worthy service provider) provided by members of the user's own social networks.

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**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR FINDING AN ENDORSABLE
PROFESSIONAL**

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of social networks. More particularly, to a system and method for providing a new way of searching and evaluating information (starting with service providers on to businesses, products, books, music, food and virtually everything you wish to make use of) by magnifying the subjective word-of-mouth mechanism into a workable, wider, much more effective and considerably more stable mechanism.

Background of the Invention

Whilst finding information over the internet, such as recommended service provider, product vendors, products or other goods, become popular activities, current search applications are inadequate where the user has too many options and with a relatively low level of trustworthiness regarding the obtained results. In these circumstances, there are provided solutions such as review websites or other recommender websites which can help the user identify potentially relevant items and assess their suitability through rudimentary support for word of mouth recommendation. However, such solutions do not take account of how people make trust decisions about these sources. For example, review sites are populated by users who have an opinion about an item listed thereon, and may consist of textual reviews and/or star ratings. However, the trustworthiness of recommendations or reviews can be hard to ascertain, with reviews provided by largely unknown individuals.

For example, potential users of a service generally do not have the trustworthiness level of information available to them on which to base

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their selection of a service provider. Therefore the process of ascertaining which service provider is the most appropriate, efficient and/or cost effective provider to perform a job can be complex and time consuming process and not always successful. In certain cases, some service providers advertise in print publications and on the Internet or other media means such as television and radio. However, a user really has no idea as to the trustworthiness or abilities of these service providers because their advertisements are self-serving and have no third-party endorsements that the user can trust.

In addition, recommendations of service providers by individuals unknown to the user cannot be relied on because the user does not know the person providing the recommendation and the person may even be related to the service provider and providing the recommendation for some form of compensation. Also, information and recommendations of an "objective" nature, derived from a preexisting standard or even a ranking apparatus, are almost always swayed or slanted by factors unknown to the consumer (user) or just plain irrelevant to him.

Moreover, keeping with our service provider example, in many cases certain service providers require a high degree of trust. These include baby sitters, medical professionals, guards, teachers, tutors and others. Users need some kind of endorsement for these service providers that they can trust and rely on. Generally, it seems like the more the information we search bears more importance for us, or the more we suffer from disinformation, or the more we're dealing with a preference oriented goods – the more we are likely not to rely on the existing "objective" or external apparatuses, but to turn to our immediate vicinity and utilize the word-of-mouth mechanism, which allows us to better appreciate the information given to us.

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Furthermore, users cannot rely on web based media including email recommendations, web site and forums in which service providers may receive endorsements. Users cannot rely on these endorsements as they may have been placed by the service providers themselves, by associates of these service providers or by third parties hired by the service providers.

On the other end, the service providers themselves would like to be able to both get an endorsement from someone known to the user and to promote such endorsements to the user. Currently, there is no mechanism where service providers can initiate and receive endorsements by people connected to the user and where service providers can promote such endorsements to the user.

This rational usually applies whenever dealing with transactions which occur in a low relevant information environment whenever there's disinformation, such as with service providers, certain product vendors, or a personal preference oriented field (like music, books, food etc.).

Therefore, there is a need for a user friendly, easy and simple way for users to find this reliable information, such as endorsable service providers and, on the other end, for service providers themselves to receive endorsements by people known to the user.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a system capable of performing search or the mining of any information which holds a certain importance to a specific user within his social network(s), i.e. among his friends (or contacts) in the Social Network (such as Facebook friends, LinkedIn connections etc.), his friends' friends and so on, wherein the

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sought information can be regarding service provider, product vendors, product themselves, hotels, hobbies, etc.

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent as the description proceeds.

Summary of the Invention

To overcome the problems users have in finding endorsable service providers and relevant information of products/services, or possibly any other information of a "personal" nature (such as their friends'\contacts' hobbies, religious views, political views, dating status, etc), and on the other end, the problems service providers and products vendors have in facilitating the receiving of effective endorsements by people known to the user, the present invention provides a social network based system which utilizes well established social connections to: (1) build trust between service providers and their potential clients; and (2) find and evaluate information.

The present invention relates to a system for allowing a user to search and evaluate information based on the fact that said information is held by or endorsed by one or more members of said user in one or more social networks or other internet application(s), comprises: a) a client application executable and operated via a user terminal (including real-time downloadable application or web script (java\asp\HTML\etc.) or even running on any other machine) for allowing said user to interact with said system via a User Interface (UI); b) one or more social network adapters each of which is used for interacting with a particular social network for retrieving information and manipulating said particular social network,

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including generating and sending messages to members of social network(s), and retrieving relevant profile information in return (e.g. profession, occupation, work history, education, location, friends/contacts list, etc.); c) a data module for storing information related to each user of said system and to one or more of their members in said social network(s), said data module is accessible by said client application; d) a search engine module for performing the search for information, either within said data module or within said social networks via said network adapters, or within both of them; and e) a client interface module for retrieving or storing information accessible by said system according to the activities of said user via said client application.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the search results are based on the user's members' (of N degree) opinion/experience in relation to the sought information, thus said search results can be better evaluated by said user based on his familiarity and appreciation of the one or more specific members specific search result is based on.

According to an embodiment of the present invention, the social network adapters, the data module, the client interfaces module, and the search engine module are located within a server connected to the social network(s) or other internet application(s).

The system may further comprises an indexer module for mining all registered users of said system and their social network(s) members, and for exporting and storing some or all related information in the data module. Where said information will be stored in a preferred way as to accelerate search related functions. Such preferred way may be storing all of the user's contacts information assigned to his profile in local database, and create a record to each of said contacts in one or more social networks

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(even if the contacts themselves never used the system before) in which relevant data for search engine matching algorithm (e.g. profession, education, location) is stored locally along with their list of contacts in one or more social networks, and so forth up to the Nth level. Thus, when user performing a search, the Search Engine in a system with indexer will not need to turn to the social networks adapters in real time at all. Another preferred way, quite similar to the abovementioned, will be to associate all contacts up to the Nth level with each user (instead of associating only first level, and then retrieving each next level of friends from current level).

According to an embodiment of the invention, the system further comprises internal messaging module for communicating with users of said system. Optionally, the system may further comprise external communication module(s) for allowing the alternative communication channels with users of said system. The external communication module(s) are selected from the group consisting of: Email Module, SMS Module, Instant Messaging Module or combinations thereof. Additionally, messaging can also be achieved by using social network's internal messaging mechanism (e.g. creating and sending an internal FaceBook\MySpace\etc. message to a certain Facebook\MySpace\etc. member) while the other party is either already a user of the system of the present invention, or not.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the system further comprises 3rd Parties Interface Module(s) for interfacing with additional 3rd parties systems. For example, the 3rd Parties Interface Module(s) can be an interface for geographical data supplying service, thereby providing geographical related information to said system, such as Google Maps.

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According to an embodiment of the invention, the data module comprises:

a) a plurality of records, each of which being associated with a service provider, a product vendor or any user of the system (such as a user that has either registered to the system in any way or used it to find service providers at least once in the past, at which point he along with all relevant data and social connections (i.e., members up to Nth degree) may have been mined, indexed and stored in database), or any of his members or contacts in any social network, wherein each record includes the connections in a social network (one or more) between the service provider or any user and members of the service provider's or user's social network by degrees of separation and by commonality of friends (or contacts). Each record (of any user, including service providers) should have a profile section comprising a plurality of comparable performance criteria indicative of the performance attributes of the service provider and possibly some informational data (e.g. description of said service provider);

b) an interface means for receiving pertinent data (e.g., regarding a service provider or any other user), according to at least one desired search criterion from the service user (e.g. service provider profession/offered services/expertise/availability/location/etc.); and

c) a processing module for comparing the stored comparable criteria and the at least one desired criterion, and for extracting relevant result(s) (e.g. preferred service provider/product vendor/person with a certain hobby, etc.) from the database on the basis of the comparison.

The data module further contains recommendations of the service providers / product vendor / products by members of the of the user's social network(s), and any other relevant information such as rating/ranking/"likes"/past transaction/service history between said service provider/ product vendor / products and certain member/user of system/any social network. The recommendation creates a substantial link

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between one or more of said service providers / product vendor / products and said user, wherein said substantial link is taken into consideration along with existing social links while a search is being performed.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the plurality of records includes tables for mapping between a UserID of the user in said system to any other identification or ID of said user in any other social network, thereby allowing to link between members of said user in any social network(s). This enables a cross-social-networks search, while members of each user are searched in all social networks said user is associated to along with internal connections in said system (e.g. recommendation link). The plurality of records may also includes data related to information provided by the user or members of said user, such as reviewing data, ratings, likes, work history, etc. regarding a certain service provider/product vendor/product.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the user can be registered to the system in any way, either directly (e.g., by filling a registration form) or indirectly (e.g., whenever an unregistered user use said system to find/search information at least once, or even a person who never used said system before, but at least one member (e.g., contact or friend) of said person (in a social network) used said system, then said person is indexed by said system.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the user can be a service provider, product vendor, product(s), etc., wherein the plurality of records includes said service provider, product vendor, or product(s), profile together with a plurality of comparable criteria indicative of the attributes of said service provider, product vendor, or product(s).

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According to an embodiment of the invention, registered users specify the type of service provider / product vendor / product itself they seek. Registered users are able to specify various criteria and customize their specifications for service providers, products or other goods. This may include, price, geography, experience, qualifications, licenses, education, etc. Once "click" by the users and they receive a list of service providers (or product). Each service provider on the list is also categorized by a detailed social connection between him/herself and the user. The categorization may be in the form of a tree, a direct line, a chart a graph or any other visual or textual format.

For example, the categorization should allow user, amongst others, to tell what is the social distance between certain service provider and himself, how many such connections (between himself and said service provider) exists, how many of his friends are directly connected to said service provider, how many of his friends (up to any social degree N) have liked\rated\reviewed said service provider, etc. Users are able to contact the service providers themselves and each and every person they are connected to (or any person who serves as a link between themselves and said service provider) in the users' social network. In this way, users simply contact the people in their own network(s) that are connected to the particular service provider (up to Nth degree) and ask them for an endorsement. The contact can be either via the system's own messaging mechanism or via other means of communication, such as: email, phone, instant message, internal messaging of one or more social networks to which said person is a member of, or any other communication method, either via a wired or wireless device.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the service providers themselves specify their particular field or fields of expertise and any

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other information regarding the service they provide and incorporate this information onto a database. On the other end, users specify the type of service provider they seek and then their specifications are matched up with the information provided by the service providers prior to this. Users then receive a list of service providers based on their criteria and the information provided by the service providers. The list is also categorized by a detailed social connection between the particular user and the service providers.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the system may also use preexisting information regarding the service provider / product vendor, which was already inserted by the Service Provider / Product Vendor to his account in one or more social networks (e.g. work history field in Facebook, work history in LinkedIn and so forth.) Such information, either direct or indirect (e.g. education out of which profession may be deduced) may pre-exist in said network regardless of current application, and possibly without special consideration of current application by said service provider or user of the system who entered said information into one or more social networks profiles. The implications of the later are that such information is already "out there", in-use, as part of profiles of members of various social network, which allows system described here-in to work effectively and yield relevant results even without any service provider / product vendor / etc. actively registering with system. As opposed to other user-based systems, which requires first the accumulating of a critical mass of users before being effective, by interfacing with existing social networks and relying on information currently existing there as well, current system is able to smoothly evade the critical-mass challenge.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the service providers provide services for persons known to users (or even known to friends of users) via

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the users' social networks (i.e., the clients). Following completion of the service (and possibly following an oral agreement in real world between service provider and his client, in which the service provider possibly requested identifying means of his client such as Email address or full name as used by customer in one or more social networks, or any other social network IDs or identifying means), the service providers may use the system to send the clients a Recommendation Request (also called a Good Service Given Request™) which is basically a request for an endorsement by the clients. If the client agrees, the client simply clicks on the request (e.g., chooses the "agree" instead of a "deny" option) and the service providers receive an endorsement from that client. The Good Service Given Request™, or the Recommendation Request, is similar to Friend Requests mechanism found on Social Networks like Facebook®. Optionally, each given recommendation should indicate the date in which it was given in order to indicate how relevant this recommendation still is. If relevant, the recommendation date could be renewed by the user who gave it in the first place (or asked to be renewed by the service provider himself).

By sending Recommendation Requests, Service Provider can advertise himself (to the members up to Nth degree of the approving entity) in the sense of enlarging his exposure to potential clients, in a personal trusted manner.

Additionally, the system and the method of the present invention may be able to produce a log of transactions made in relation to the search or the object of inquiry. Thus, the user who searches and finds thus recommended service provider / product vendor could see a "work log" or a "transactions history" of the service provider / product vendor constructed only from transactions made with his friends (or contacts) within the

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social network. For example, when a user is searching for a carpenter and in the search results there is one carpenter who served three friends of the user, The user could then see when those transactions took place (like a work history), how many times and any other pertinent information regarding that transaction. This means two things: the first is that the system will allow for service receivers / product purchasers to note a specific transaction, and also to elaborate on its specific attributes and the second thing is that this information will be visible to users from their social networks that search for the same service/product. Possibly, users can search a Service Provider which has previously performed a certain specific task to members of searcher's social circle. E.g. If I'm interested in having a carpenter build a staircase for me, it may be possible to search only carpenters who have built such staircase (or something similar\equivalent) to any member of my social networks in the recent past.

In another embodiment, the clients themselves may endorse the service providers by inputting an endorsement into the service providers' social network (regardless of whether service provider has previously sent them a Recommendation Request).

As may be understood, the system's power lies in the fact that a user is connected to service providers via social connections, and the more such connection exists to service provider, the better service the system can provide to users. Therefore, it is the system's best interest to know of as many service providers as possible. Therefore, another embodiment allows users to specify any of their connections (up to any distance) as being a service provider, or of holding a certain profession, selling a certain product, having a certain hobby and so forth. Following the user's declaration of a certain connection providing a certain service, said

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presumable service provider receives a notification of that (either in Email, SMS, social network messaging, etc.) and may approve it. This whole procedure is very similar in its mechanism to the sending and approving of a Recommendation Request (only the initiator is the "regular" user). Once approved, said service provider will be noted as such in the Data Module, and any consequent searches will also yield him as a relevant result.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the system further comprises a software component which attaches itself to existing sites, thereby allowing the search engine module to search with said existing sites, and/or filter information in said existing sites to show only information produced/edited by members of viewer, and/or associate information in said existing sites with members of viewers.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the software component allows users to add information (such as comments or reviews or personal notes) to existing sites under their names/identities or associate information in existing sites with their names/identities in their social networks or current system. Additionally, the software component allows users to rank/rate certain existing data in existing websites. Furthermore, while browsing to existing sites the software component allows users to see ranking composed of single ranking made by members (as explained with respect to the rankings mechanism of the system described herein).

The present invention further relates to a computer implementation method within a system for allowing a user to search and evaluate information based on the fact that this information is held by or endorsed by one or more members of said user in one or more social networks or other internet application(s), which comprises: a) Executing a client

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application on a user terminal for allowing said user to search and evaluate information and to generally communicate with said system (thereby allowing the user, via said client application, to enjoy all the functionality the server offers, including: managing the system connections, rendering new connections and recommendation and ranking); b) Interacting with social network(s) for retrieving information and manipulating said social network(s) via social network adapter(s); c) Storing information related to each user of said system and to one or more of their members in said social network(s), said information is stored within a data module which is accessible by said client application; d) upon request from said client application, performing search for information, either within said data module or within said social network(s) or within both, wherein the search is performed by a search engine module; and e) retrieving or storing information accessible by said system according to the activities of said user via said client application.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the activities of the user are selected from the group consisting of: conducting a search, recommending, sending a recommendation request (e.g. by the user himself), approving or denying a recommendation request, notifying system of someone as holding/conducting a certain profession/hobby/business/etc., approving or denying such claim, receiving an endorsement, actively seeking an endorsement, renewing an endorsement, selecting a service provider/product vendor/person holding a certain hobby/etc. from a plurality of service providers / product vendors / members / etc., messaging any contact between user and service provider / product vendors / members / etc, messaging any service provider / product vendors / members / etc, mining and evaluating of certain kinds of information, "subjective" ranking a service provider / product vendors / products / etc, calculating and presenting ranking information using the registered user's

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own social network, creating or updating a profile, or any combination thereof.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the actively seeking of an endorsement, comprises the steps of: a) sending an electronic endorsement request (aka Recommendation Request) to at least one entity by a registered user (e.g. service provider/product vendor) via said client application, wherein the entity is the registered user himself, other registered user or non-registered entity; and, whereby upon receiving said endorsement by said entity, b) verifying said endorsement by the entity receiving said Recommendation Request by clicking on a link representing said endorsement request, thereby endorsing said request of said user by said entity wherein said endorsement is visible on the internet or other electronic media.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the Recommendation Request can be sent in several ways, such as: an existing social network messaging mechanism, SMS, Email, system internal messaging mechanism or any combinations thereof.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the endorsements can be severed and renewed by the entity after a certain time has passed since the last verified endorsement.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the selecting of a service provider from a plurality of service providers for the performance of a job, comprises the steps of: a) entering keywords for conducting a search for said service provider via the client application of a user; and, in return b) receiving information according to said keywords and the data

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incorporating the members of the social network(s) of said register user with the attributes of the keywords provided.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the mining and evaluation of certain kinds of information comprises scanning the user' own social network for said information.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the activities further comprise allowing a service provider or a product vendor to advertise themselves in a subjective or word-of-mouth manner, (i.e., to actively seek endorsements, thus enlarging his exposure to potential clients, in a personal trusted manner), to utilize social networks, and friends/contact therein for advertising, etc. Additionally, the activities further comprise allowing a user to declare that a certain person is a professional of some sort.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the results of the search are sorted and/or filtered by relevant parameters, such as: physical proximity, time constraints and availability, prior transactions etc.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the method further comprises producing a log of transactions made in relation to the search. Additionally, the method may further comprise segmenting the search according to groups the user is a part of. The method may further comprises utilizing information already exists in social networks including contacts and other data, such as profession, hobbies, etc.

Yet another embodiment of the present invention, is a new ranking or grading method which is based only on the user point of view in the social network, i.e. it takes into account only the ranking given to the sought

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information (e.g. service provider) by or through the user's friends (or contacts, up to any social degree\distance) alone.

The present invention further relates to a method for advertising a service/product by creating a social link of some kind (like a recommendation) between the service provider (e.g. a lawyer) / product vendor (e.g. a car salesman) / product itself (e.g. a book), and the person used the service/product. This social link is initiated by the provider/vendor (or by the customer) by sending a Recommendation Request (or any other request to which its acceptance create a link or a connection between the sender and the receiver) to one or more users in one or more social networks. Once approved by user, this social link will appear on a search which scans a user's social network thus allowing the searching party (who is a contact of approving/recommending user) to know which ones of his friends (or contacts) made use of this aforementioned service/product.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The above and other characteristics and advantages of the invention will be better understood through the following illustrative and non-limitative detailed description of preferred embodiments thereof, with reference to the appended drawing:

- Fig. 1 schematically illustrates the server and clients components of a system for searching an endorsable service provider (or product) and for advertising a service provider (or product) in such a way, according to an embodiment of the present invention;
- Fig. 2 schematically illustrates in a block diagram form the server of the system of Fig. 1, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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- Fig. 3 schematically illustrates a system for allowing a user to quantify, compare and select competing service providers based on the service providers' connections on one or more social networks in which the user is a member and based on recommendations concerning the service providers provided by members of the user's social networks, according to one embodiment of the present invention;
- Figs. 4A-4C schematically illustrate examples of search results layout for service providers who are connected to members of the customer's social network within a number of degrees of separation from the customer in the social network, according to embodiments of the invention;
- Fig. 5 is a flow chart demonstrating a search procedure using the system of the present invention;
- Fig. 6 is a flow chart demonstrating a method for sending a Recommendation Request message using the system of the present invention;
- Fig. 7 is a flow chart demonstrating a method for handling a received Recommendation Request message using the system of the present invention;
- Fig. 8 is a flow chart demonstrating the declaring of another person of holding a certain profession using the system of the present invention;
- Fig. 9 is a flow chart demonstrating the registration of a professional in the system of the present invention;
- Fig. 10 schematically illustrates an example for connections management page layout, according to an embodiment of the invention;

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- Fig. 11 is a table which represents the users that are registered with the system, according to an embodiment of the invention; and
- Fig. 12 is a table which represents the user's members, according to an embodiment of the invention.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments

The following embodiments and aspects thereof are described and illustrated in conjunction with systems, tools methods, and so forth, which are meant to be merely illustrative, not limiting in scope.

The term "**service provider**" refers in the text and claims herein to any and all service providers, professionals, sellers, salespersons, small shop owners, or shops which sell dedicated, unique or rare products, and anyone else who provides any type of product or service. Although the "service provider" terminology is generally used, it should not be found as limiting in any way, but only serves as a (rather concrete) example, and it is the aim of the present invention to offer such solution/system to all sorts of services, products, products vendors, businesses, and for personal uses such as hobbies, etc. etc.

The terms "**Product Vendor**" or "**Product Vendors**" refers in the text and claims herein to both manufacturing entities of product, suppliers, sellers and all the links in chain of production from manufacturing to selling product to customers (either in brick and mortar stores or online shops, or any other way).

The terms "**member**" or "**members**" refers in the text and claims herein to individuals (either persons or other entities, such as organizations), which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of

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interdependency, such as friendship (or further social circles in any degree, such as friends of friends, etc.), kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige. Members can be friends (or contacts) of the user in a preexisting social network (such as Facebook) and/or friends (contacts) of friends up until the Nth level and/or people who shares an activity (or opinion) with the user and/or are a part of the same group as the user. For example, individuals belonging to same group in Facebook (or other social networks), being a fan of same object, liking same object, having same gender/address/hobbies/job, being in same age group, etc.

In the following detailed description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. However, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In some instances, well-known methods, procedures, components and circuits have not been described in detail, for the sake of brevity.

In broad concept the present invention provides a system which can be used by an individual wishing to select an endorsable service provider or a product (or find personal information regarding his connections such as which of them plays chess as a hobby). An embodiment of the present invention provides a method and system for achieving an efficient marketplace between a group of service providers / product vendors and at least one potential client, where the client would like to utilize the services of a service provider that the client can determine via people known to him (or other members) that the service provider is trustworthy and competent or any other aspect of the service provider. The preferred embodiment may advantageously be applied to the use of social networks and degrees of

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separation between the client's social network and the service provider / product vendor / product users.

Fig. 1 is a diagram depicting two main components (a server and one or more dedicated user clients 2) of a system for searching an endorsable professional (or product) and for advertising a professional (or product) in such a way, according to an embodiment of the present invention involved. Client 2 is a User Interface (UI) application (e.g., a stand-alone software program, or interpreted "code" such as HTML\Java-script of a website, iPhone application, etc.) through which a user may operate and interact with (normally there will be such client application running per user on his local machine, i.e., user terminal) while server 1 is a centralized system in charge for storing, retrieving and processing all data, as common in such Client-Server applications. For example, whenever user browses to a website, browser downloads a "code" (HTML\asp\jave, etc.) which represent client 2 and run it on the user terminal, all in real time. Alternatively, client 2 can be an iPhone application, which is need to be installed in the iPhone in order to run.

Client 2 & Server 1 may run on the same physical machine and even be parts of the same application or process. They may also be independent programs running on different physical machines. Connection between Client & Server is created & maintained as known to those skilled in the art of Client-Server systems (most obvious implementation is via sockets over internet). Client 2 may be a software application installed by user in advance, or it may be code running on user's machine simply by browsing to a certain URL (including a standalone website, Facebook application, LinkedIn application, etc.)

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Fig. 2 is a block diagram depicting the Server 1 of the system of the present invention. Server 1 comprises a Client Interface Module 9 per session\user. The Client Interface Module 9 follows the user actions and reactions and accesses other components (as depicted) in the Server 1 in order to retrieve or store the information according to the user behavior via the Client application. Each user of the system is provided with a unique user identifier (i.e., UserID) which is used to identify users within the system (e.g., by an integer value or other set of characters).

Server 1 further comprises of a Social Network Adapter 5, one per each supported social network (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn(R), MySpace, etc.). The Social Network Adapter 5 interacts with a particular social network and retrieves (e.g. social data as friends list, or profession data of a certain friend, etc.) and manipulates (e.g. sends an internal message or notification to a member) that particular social networks. The interfacing or interacting with existing social networks (via the appropriate Social Network Adapters (5)), can be done in several ways, such as by using the API provided by such social network, or by imitating the behavior of user when using said social networks (to retrieve a certain information, e.g. friends list of a certain member of social network, his profession, work history, education, etc.), or by imitating the data transfer between user's machine (i.e., user terminal) and social network which occurs when user using said social networks (to retrieve a certain information, e.g. friends list of a certain member of social network, his profession, work history, education, etc.). In other words, regardless of exposed API, any feat a user can do when browsing and interacting with a certain social networks, so can the present system do by implementing suitable software programs as are known to persons skilled in the art.

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System 1 further comprises of a Data Module 7 which stores all system information. Such data information may be, for example:

- Information of a certain Professional (his profession, description, working hours, location, whether he does house calls or not, coverage area, etc.);
- social connections data such as the linking of any professional to any user and vice versa along with the nature of such connection and any additional data (e.g. Likes \ Ratings, etc.), or between users themselves or between professionals (e.g. following a recommendation request, or as exported from an existing social network);
- Stored details of any user (professional or searcher) whether he entered them himself via the system, retrieved from one or more other social networks or sources, or deduced by the system based on his previous usage (e.g. if last time user performed a search he searched for service providers in NYC, NY, system may store such preferences for later use);
- Reviews, Previous Work history, etc. per each professional;
- Messaging history between which at least on of the sides is a member of the system, etc.;
- Mapping of each user in the system to one or more profiles in one or more social networks (e.g., based on their unique IDs in each social network and their UserID); and etc.

System 1 may further comprise an Indexer Module 6. The purpose of the Indexer Module 6 is to mine all users of the system (either professional or searchers, whether registered by the system, or used it at least once before, or friends of such users, or based on any criteria) and export some or all of system related information (such as friends list, location of residence, education, work info, profession, etc.) and store it in the Data

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Module 7. Such mining is done "offline" (i.e., even when a user is not "online" or connected to the system) and allows for faster searches at a later time, as interaction with network is not required in search runtime. Optionally, Indexer Module 6 should re-mine previous mined profiles and look for changes since last mining, in order to allow the system to remain updated. Indexer Module 6 is optional and the system may be implemented with a partial Indexer Module or without any at all (by performing all social network queries in real-time).

System 1 further comprises of a Search Engine Module 3 which actually performs the search for desired information, such as a professional or a product. If all information is already stored in Data Module 7 (via Indexer Module 6 if such exists in the system) - Search Engine Module 3 may only turn to search in Data Module 7. Otherwise it searches in both Data Module 7 and in social networks via their corresponding network adapters 5.

If all data is stored in Data Module 7, Search Engine Module 3 starts with current user, goes through all friends list and searches for a professional with matching criteria (such as profession, location, coverage area, expertise, makes house calls, etc.) then Search Engine Module 3 continues to further social circles (degrees of separation) while looking for matches and retrieving all so-far found matches so Client could present them to user in real-time.

If social data is not fully exported from Social networks to Data Module 7 then Search Engine Module 3 translates current internal UserID via mapping tables to the IDs of the same user in other social networks (e.g., see the description hereinafter with respect to the tables shown in Figs. 11 and 12), and searches friends list in both local Data Module 7 and

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corresponding Social Networks. For each searched user (friend, friend of friend, etc.) whether a connection within current system or "external" connection in any one or more social networks, Search Engine Module 3 checks with Data Module 7 whether this user has additional information stored in the system (e.g., perhaps this user didn't fill Profession on Facebook but did fill it via the UI of client 2 and such information now reachable or exists in the system of the present invention). Such additional information may be professional information of searched user, or social information, that is more connections to other users (on top of connections of user within its profile in social network(s)). Such additional connections may stem from the approval of one or more Recommendation Requests. Search Engine Module 3 continues to further social circles (degrees of separation) while looking for matches and retrieving all so-far found matches so Client 2 could present them to user in real-time, as shown with respect to Fig. 4.

In order to search information stored in Data Module 7 regarding a member of an external social network, mapping tables or other references should be used to convert his ID there back to internal UserID (if such exists in the system). In addition, since a user registered to the system may have specified more than one social network, his UserID may be mapped to IDs of more than one social network, and a single search as described above may involve several social networks, and friends of a certain contact may be searched in more than one social network. Search across more than one social network is obtained by using information stored within the data module 7 and which is taken from the relevant tables as shown with respect to the following tables in Figs 11 and 12.

Fig. 11 is an example for a table stored in the data module 7 which represents the users that are registered with the system (either service

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providers, searching "regular" users, or their contacts who might have never used the application but their records were created in system's Data Module 7 by the Indexer Module 6, while indexing mining searching users' information). For each user one or more of the following parameters are stored in the table: an internal UserID, an email (which is unique across the internet), social network IDs (e.g., Facebook ID in order to map the user to a Facebook account), a type (e.g., integer or string), which tells the system which kind of user this is (e.g. service provider, non-service provider) and a profession (Note, profession is only an example for a system for searching service providers. For other system based on present invention for searching friends with similar interest, other fields may be stored in profile such as "hobbies", or "musical instruments", "sports", or whether plays chess or not, tennis, etc.). This table may also include location related information about the user (this information can be stored in a separate table).

Fig. 12 is an example for a table stored in the data module 7 which represents the user's members (e.g., the user's direct friends or contacts). This table contains a mapping of all of the direct friends of the user registered with the system. Each direct friend can either have a user ID within the system (in the case this direct friend is registered with the system) or a Facebook ID which maps that friend according to his Facebook account (and similiarly possibly also MySpaceID, LinkedInId, etc.). It should be noted that in this example the Row ID is used as the unique identifier of each friend. Possibly, table can also contain friends\contacts of farther social circle (for faster referencing), in which case every row in table should also contain level of friendship and connecting\linking friends\contacts.

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System 1 may further comprises of one or more External Communication Module(s) 8 which allows the communication of the system with users by means other than internal messaging or messaging within social networks in which they are members of (via the Social Network Adapters 5). Such Communication Modules may be an Email Module (for creating and sending or receiving emails to users of the system, and/or by users of the system), SMS Module (for creating and sending or receiving emails to users of system, and/or by users of the system), etc.

System 1 further comprises of one or more 3rd Parties Interface Module(s) 4 for interfacing with 3rd parties systems other than social networks or search engines. Such modules may include geographical data supplying service for all geographical related information (e.g., Google Maps), and the like.

The system of the present invention facilitates the provision of services on a computer network to prospective service providers or clients. The system enables the selection of a service provider from a plurality of service providers for the performance of a job.

The following is an example for implementing the system and method of the present invention with Facebook social network.

Fig. 3 schematically illustrates, in a block diagram form, a system 10 for allowing a user to search and evaluate different kinds of information, such as quantify, compare and select competing service providers, based on the service providers' connections on a social network (e.g., Facebook) in which the user is a member and based on recommendations and endorsements concerning the service providers provided by members of the user's own social networks.

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System 10 is implemented within a common network infrastructure, such as the Internet. Access to the network can be done via any suitable user terminal device installed with the dedicated user client 2 (Fig. 1), such as a Personal Computer (PC), laptop 12, cellular phone 13, PDA, or similar devices with network communication capabilities.

System 10 comprises a Facebook Markup Language (FBML) server 15 (which is an instance of Social Network Adapter Module 5 for interfacing with Facebook) and a system server 11 (comprising Search Engine Module 3, 3rd parties interface module 4, external communication module 8 and possibly indexer module 6) both of which are connected to a Facebook application 19 (which is one example for a client interface module 9) (of course, the system server 11 can be connected to other social networks or other internet application). System 10 also comprises a Data Module, such as database 17, which is accessible by user terminal device, such as laptop 12 or cellular phone 13 (via the dedicated user client 2, the Facebook application 19 in said example). The Data Module is either internally or remotely connected to server 11 such as database 17. System 10 may further comprises a cellular interface 18 for allowing a cellular based communication device, such as cellular phone 13, to interact (via a cellular operator 14) with the system of the present invention. FBML server 15 dedicated for the Facebook application. Of course, other social network adapters may also be used with respect to other social networks.

The database 17, comprises: a) a plurality of records, each record being associated with a service provider, wherein each record includes the connection in a social network between the service provider and members of the client's social network by degrees of separation, and a service provider profile including a plurality of comparable performance criteria indicative of the performance attributes of the service provider; b)

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interface means for receiving a pertinent service provider data, at least one desired performance criterion from the service user; and c) processing module for comparing the stored comparable performance criteria and the at least one desired performance criterion, and for extracting at least one preferred service provider from the database on the basis of the comparison.

According to an embodiment of the present invention, a social network (e.g., Facebook) is used to establish trust between service providers and customers. The connections and degrees of separation in a social network (i.e., friends, friends of friends, etc.) can be used to make the service providers endorsable, which will enable the customer (i.e., the searcher which is a registered user who perform the search) to be able to determine the trustworthiness and competence of the service provider from people known to the customer. For example, in a marketplace of human-expertise a social network allows a customer to search for service providers (e.g., painters, plumbers, etc.) who are connected to members of the customer's social network within a number of degrees of separation from the customer in the social network, as shown with respect to Fig. 4A. The customer (e.g., Roi) searches for a painter and receives results in which he learns that the painter (e.g., David) is connected to a member/friend (e.g., Liat) in the customer' social network. Now, all Roi has to do is contact his friend Liat and ask Liat to endorse David. Liat can either endorse David or tell Roi that David is not reliable, trustworthy, charges too much etc. Either way, Roi now knows whether or not to hire David or to look for another service provider.

Furthermore, continuing with the example from above, David may have already done work for Liat and asked Liat to provide him with the Good Service Given Request™ and if Liat did so, then Roi would have seen this

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endorsement by Liat and would know that David is reliable and that Liat has endorsed him. In this way, Roi does not have to contact Liat and inquire about David.

Fig. 4A demonstrates 3 types of service providers that may be found by the system:

- 1) Service providers which have filled their occupation in a certain social networks, has never registered to the present system (and might not even be aware of its existence), and are part of the searcher's social network (e.g. Aharon);
- 2) service providers which have registered to the system, and filled their professional profile there (whether they have filled their occupation information in a social network or not), and are part of the searcher's social network (e.g. Shlomo); and
- 3) Service providers which have registered to the system, and filled their professional profile there (whether they have filled their occupation information in a social network or not), but are NOT part of the searcher's social network (e.g. Yosi). However, following the Good Service Given Request™ (or any request to which its acceptance indicates a "professional relationship" between the sender and the receiver) they have given to a contact of the searcher (e.g. Yosi has given Good Service Given Request™ to Ohad), said contact have approved their Recommendation Request, or recommended them on his own accord (e.g. Yosi have sent a Recommendation to Ohad, which approved it, thus allowing Roi to find Yosi as a potential painter as well).

It should be noted that Fig 4A is only one possible way to present search results and should not be found as limiting in any way. For example, Fig. 4B schematically illustrates another possible way to present results by using several rows (e.g., rows 41-43), one above the other, where each row

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containing service providers matching search criteria in a certain social distance from the searcher. Shown in first row 41, friends of a searcher 40 (in any social network, e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), or service providers which the searcher 40 previously approved their Recommendation Request. In second row 42, friends of friends, or service providers which a friend previously approved their Recommendation Request, or possibly service providers which have been recommended or are connected to a service provider which searcher 40 previously approved their Recommendation Request and so forth. In this case exact connection between searcher 40 and each service provider are not illustrated, but may be presented separately when clicking on a certain service provider for example (Nina Blomphild), as shown with respect to Figs. 4B and 4C.

The system and method of the present invention allows users to provide a "subjective" ranking to a certain service provider / product vendor (e.g. in the form of marking him by "like", or grading him numerically, etc.). Thus, same or other user reviewing information regarding the service provider / product vendor can see the rankings (e.g. the ranking can be appeared in the search results or in the profile of the service provider). The "subjective" ranking is calculated from the user's point of view, i.e. it takes into account only the ranking given to the sought information (e.g. service provider) by or through the user's members (up to any social degree/distance) alone. For example, the mechanism for calculating the ranking can use different weights for contacts in different degrees of separation or belonging to a certain group declared as "trusted" or "having similar taste", etc. Alternatively, the mechanism can use different weights for ranking depending on their creation time (e.g. recent ranks have higher weight than old ranks).

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The "subjective" ranking means that the same information (e.g. service provider) might receive a different score in its ranking depending on who is the specific user who searched for it (and the social distance employed in search (set either by user or by system configuration)). Optionally, each ranking should be separately dated in order to indicate how relevant this ranking still is. The ranking date could be renewed by the user who ranked it in the first place. The Rank itself as it is computed regarding a certain information (e.g. service provider) from the perspective of a certain user searching up to a certain social depth/distance, may take into consideration some rates more than others (instead of simply using an arithmetic mean), that is use different "weights" for the different ratings. For instance, rating of closer contacts (social distance), or of a previously defined group of "trusted contacts" or contact with "similar taste" should have more influence in calculating the total rank than others (possibly farther in social network). Also, ranking given recently should possibly have more weight than ranking given along time ago, etc.

An example for a simple algorithm employing the above mentioned may be to count the rank of the farthest connection (Nth level) as one vote, the next level as 2 votes, the next as 4, and the closest level to the searcher as 2^N . Same can be done with dates: divide the weights described above according to social distance by 2^K while K is the number of full years that have passed between time of rate and now. Then all ranks can be calculated in the well-known manner of weighted average using their weights as described.

Fig. 5 is a flow chart demonstrating the search procedure of the system described hereinabove with respect to Figs. 1-4, according an embodiment of the present invention. The Search start with the user entering the user client application [S101] which may be implemented as a Facebook

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application, MySpace application (or an application of any other social network in which the user is a member of), a stand-alone website, a proprietary software application, a mobile application (such as iPhone application), etc.

At next step [S102], the user navigates to the search page in the client application (which may be the first page for a non-professional user) and enters all search criteria which may include profession (e.g. Physician), expertise (e.g. Dentist), that makes house calls, at 22:00, and services the east-village neighborhood in New York City, NY (e.g., which it can be the location where the user lives). Possibly, the user may also choose himself the level\depth of social circles to search in (this may also be hard-set by system operators). Once the user "clicks" search, Client 2 transfers all this information (and any other relevant information) to the Server 1 wherein a Client Interface Module 9 in charge of this session receives that information and contacts the Search Engine Module 3 to perform search with specified criteria.

At the next step [S103], Search Engine Module 3 searches Data Module 7 and possibly one or more Social Network Adapters 5 (depending on whether Indexer Module 6 exists and already mined all relevant profiles, and have done it lately enough so their representation is presumed up to date in Data Module 7). Search is performed as described above based on the search criteria provided by the user. While comparing search criteria and users data, Search Engine Module 3 may turn to 3rd Parties such as a Geographical Data Source via 3rd parties Interfaces 4 and use them to calculate whether a certain user is within specified distance from the searcher.

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At the next step [S104], Search Engine Module 3 updates Client Interface Module 9 for every matching professional found, and CIM 9 transfers information to Client 2 which may show search results in real-time as they are gathered or wait until the end of the process. Search results are shown accompanied by any information such as: professional name, location, geographical distance from searchers location, number of connections between user and professional, number of recommendation requests given by members of user's social circles (up to the searched depth as specified by user), number of "likes" given by members of user's social circles (up to the searched depth as specified by user), a grade calculated by ratings of members of user's social circles (up to the searched depth as specified by user). Such rating algorithm may give greater weight to ratings of closer connections, or rating given more recently. A general (classic\old fashioned) number of recommendations\likes\grade (composed of all system users and not only of user social circles), etc.

At the next step [S105], the user can sort or filter search results according to any criteria, including criteria abovementioned. The user can view all social connections between himself and every Professional [S106], e.g., as shown with respect to the layout in Figs. 4A, 4B or 4C. User can contact any of the connecting social links [S107]. The message written by user in Client 2 is sent to Client Interface Module 9 and transferred to destination either by system internal messages (in which new message will be stored in Data Module 7 and presented to receiver upon his next entrance to application. Social Network Adapter(s) 5 may be used to send "notification" to user that a message is waiting for him in application). Message may also be sent to destination directly via Social Network Messaging of the social network(s) the contacted user is member of via Social Network Adapter(s) 5). The contacted user may also receive any other kind of message in any other medium such as SMS or email

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generated and sent by the External Communication Module 8. In the same manner the searching user may contact any of the professionals [S108].

Fig. 6 is a flow chart demonstrating a method for sending recommendation requests using the system of the present invention with respect to Figs. 1-4. The process starts with the user entering the client 2 application [S201] which may be implemented as a Facebook Application, MySpace Application (or an application of any other social network in which the user is a member of), a stand-alone website, a proprietary software application, a mobile application (such as iPhone application), etc.

At the next step [S202], the user navigates to the Recommendations management page (which may be the first page for a professional user) where he may specify one or more persons to send Recommendation Requests to. At the next step [S203], the user specifies persons to send Recommendation Requests to, either in a singular unambiguous way (e.g. using email addresses (which is unique per person)) or in an ambiguous manner (e.g. name and last name) in which case user will be presented with a list of all candidates (from all relevant social networks) matching ambiguous data criteria (e.g. having specified name and last name) and user can choose amongst them. The user then "clicks" to approve his choices for sending the recommendation requests. The list compiled by the user in Client 2 reaches Server 1, via Client Interface Module 9, which updates the Data Module 7 accordingly.

At the next step [S204], as for generating the message for notifying the target persons (which may not even be users of the system thus far), it may be done (as any other message sent) in the following ways: either by system internal messages (in which new message will be stored in Data Module 7 and presented to the receiver upon his next entrance to the

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client 2 application. Social Network Adapter(s) 5 may be used to send "notification" to user that a message is waiting for him in client 2 application). Message may also be sent to destination directly via Social Network Messaging of the social network(s) the user is member of via Social Network Adapter(s) 5). The user may also receive any other kind of message in any other medium such as SMS or email by using the External Communication Module 8.

Fig. 7 is a flow chart demonstrating the receiving of recommendation requests using the system of the present invention. At first [S205], the user may receive a recommendation requests in any manner including SMS, Email, message within social network(s), or notification in social network saying an email is received in current client 2 application, etc. The message itself may allow user to reply directly (by sending an SMS back, clicking on a link or a button, etc.), or may require the user to enter the application and answer from there.

At the next step [S206], the user may approve or disapprove the Recommendation Request. When disapproving, the user may specify the reasons for it (e.g., whether it is because the user was not satisfied with service given or, such service was never given, etc). This option also allows spamming control. If approving, the user may mark professional as "Like", rate him, write a review, etc. The user may also perform any of these activities or change them any other time (e.g., in a connections management page as shown with respect to Fig. 10). At the next step [S207], the user's decision and any other additional information is saved in Data Module 7. If the user has approved the Recommendation Request, new connection is created between service provider and approving user. This is done by updating both tables in database (adding each other to their corresponding connections list). Thus, next time the user (or any of

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his friends, friends of friends, etc.) searches for such a professional, said professional will appear in search results and his ranking / number of likes / number of connections / recommendations etc. will be composed of the approving user's [S208].

Fig. 8 is a flow chart demonstrating the declaring of another person of holding a certain profession using the system of the present invention with respect to Figs. 1-4. The process starts [S301] with the user entering the client 2 application which may be implemented as a Facebook application, MySpace application (or an application of any other social network in which the user is a member of), a stand-alone website, a proprietary software application, a mobile application (such as iPhone application), etc.

At the next step [S302], the user navigates to a connections management page or section and specifies one or more persons and marks them as having a certain profession (and expertise or any other details). The user may specify persons to recommend in a singular unambiguous way (e.g. by selecting them from their own friends list, or by using email addresses) or in an ambiguous manner (e.g. name and last name) in which case user will be presented with a list of all candidates (from all relevant social networks) matching ambiguous data criteria (e.g. having specified name and last name) and user can choose amongst them. At this point, the user may even mark the proposed professional as "liked", rate him, write review, etc. This will all become accessible to others once the proposed professional approved user notification.

At the next step [S303], the user then "clicks" \approves his choices and the list compiled by the user in Client 2 reaches Server 1, Client Interface Module 9, which updates the Data Module 7 accordingly. As for generating

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the message for notifying the target persons (which may not even be users of the system thus far), it may be done (as any other message sent) in the following ways: either by system internal messages (in which new message will be stored in Data Module 7 and presented to receiver upon his next entrance to Client 2 application. At the next step [S304], Social Network Adapter(s) 5 may be used to send "notification" to user that a message is waiting for him in the Client 2 application). Message may also be sent to destination directly via Social Network Messaging of the social network(s) the user is member of via Social Network Adapter(s) 5). User may also receive any other kind of message in any other medium such as SMS or email by using the External Communication Module 8.

At any later point in time [S305] the proposed professional(s) may receive a notification saying they were identified of being professionals of a certain profession by certain someone of which they can approve or deny. The user may receive such a message in any manner including SMS, Email, message within social network(s), or notification in social network saying he has an email in current application, etc. The message itself may allow user to reply directly (by sending an SMS back, clicking on a link or a button, etc.), or may require the user to enter the application and answer from there.

The received user (i.e., the proposed professional) may approve or disapprove the Recommendation Request [S306]. When disapproving, the received user may specify the reason(s) for the disapproving (e.g., whether it is because he is not such a professional or doesn't wish to be part of the system's database). This also allows for spamming control. The received user's decision and any other additional information are saved in Data Module 7 (e.g. if not allocated before and internal UserId is allocated for user and mapped to his one or more IDs of profiles in existing social

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networks. And a record under his ID is updated to hold his just approved professional details). The professional may then decide to fully register and fill out all other relevant details in the manner described with respect to Fig. 9. [S307]. If the received user has approved as being a professional, then next time any of his friends, friends of friends, etc. searches for such a professional, said professional will appear in search results [S308].

Fig. 9 is a flow chart demonstrating the registration of a professional in the system of the present invention with respect to Figs. 1-4. The process start [S401] with the user entering the client 2 application which may be implemented as a Facebook application, MySpace application (or an application of any other social network in which the user is a member of), a stand-alone website, a proprietary software application, a mobile application (such as iPhone application), etc.

At the next step [S402], the user navigates to the Register as Professional page or section (which may be the first page for a first-timer professional user) and enters all relevant information (some of which may be pre-filled by the system if said professional uses the application via a social network and such relevant information is already stored in his profile there) which may include profession (e.g. Physician), expertise (e.g. Dentist), whether or not he makes house calls, working hours, types services offered, where he is located, and coverage area to which he agrees to make house calls, etc.

At the next step [S403], the user can then associate his new professional profile in application with one or more existing profiles in other social networks. This may be done automatically if user accesses an application running on such social network (e.g. if the system is implemented as a Facebook Application, and user access it with his Facebook user) and he is logged in, or he may create such an association manually by supplying all

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required information to the application. At the next step [S404], Client 2 sends all this information to Server 1 which in turn saves it in Data Module 7. Following his registration the Professional user will be available to future searches and next time any of his friends, friends of friends, etc. searches for such a professional, said professional will appear in search results. Professional user may now turn to sending Recommendation Requests to customers whom he served in the past.

The mining and the evaluation of certain kinds of information obtained by scanning the registered user's own social network for that information. For example, if the user is searching for a book to read (preference oriented) and he's not sure about this one book he heard about, he could search within his social network for someone who has already read that book to endorse it. This could work either by accessing an internal social network application, by a standalone site which connects to the social network or by a software component which attaches itself to preexisting sites (as described herein below).

According to another embodiment of the invention the system further comprises a software component which attaches itself to preexisting sites (e.g. Amazon, TripAdvisor, music sites, gadgets sites etc.) and enables the "subjective search", i.e. the search of the user's own social network to find people who used this certain service/product and can supply pertinent information, or at least subjective ratings of items in said preexisting sites, or subjective reviews.

Raters or reviewers may be contacted by user for further information and therefore are further accounted for their reviews/ratings. Such information may either be stored in system's data module, indicated as referencing a certain item of a certain preexisting site, thus when browsing to a certain

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site, and a certain item within site, said software component could turn to data module and retrieve information regarding said item created by a member of current user social networks (up to a certain level). Alternately, such information may be stored in preexisting site already, yet correlated to one or more profiles of one or more members of social network or of the present system, thus when browsing to a certain site, and a certain item within site, said software component could turn to data module and check which of the information regarding said items was created by a social contact of user (by performing a social network search). Some websites already contain the later capability of allowing users of social network to use their social network identity and comment on items in other sites. Current software component could benefit from this and provide results, possibly from first use, by filtering (on user's request) and showing only reviews/comments made by friends on a certain website, or performing a search regarding content in a certain website based on friends opinion of it, or showing a ranking calculated only by contacts' ranking in places where rankings are also associated to specific users (of social networks).

Of course, other usages of the system and method of the present invention can be directed to product vendors, product themselves, hotels, hobbies, etc. For example, each user may enter one or more hobbies (playing Guitar, chess, soccer, which kinds of sport activities he engages, etc.). On the other hand, any person interested in starting a band and looking for a drummer, or wants to organize a soccer match or looking for a checkmate partner, may use such the system to find his partners. As with service providers, such hobbies information already exists in many social networks (e.g. in the form of Fan pages in Facebook)

Another kind of relevant information which can be utilized by the system and method of the present invention are hobbies. In this scenario, user

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may indicate what his hobbies are, such as what kind of instruments he plays, which kinds of sport activities he engages, etc.

Furthermore, since such information already exists in many social networks (in the form of specific data filled by a person, or deduced by items/activities/companies he is a fan of, marked as liked before, groups he is member of, etc. such an application will yield interesting results right from the beginning, similar to the "service provider seeking" application.

According to an embodiment of the present invention, the method may further comprises software component for segmenting the search according to groups a user registered to the system of the present invention is a part of. This can be used by registered users who wish to know the opinions of members of those groups about a certain service/product. This is possible as long as this group exists on a social network or is itself a social network, or is definable by the user, either by setting some criteria or choosing from predefined criteria. Example for such groups: Males/Females, Musicians, People who live in the East Village, NYC, People who own a cat, Peace Activists, member of a certain group in a certain social network, or "fans" of a certain product / firm, people with a certain hobby, or that loved a certain book/movie, etc.

Of course, the system of the present invention can be used for other search usages (other than service providers), such as search for information regarding product vendors, product themselves, hotels, hobbies etc. For example, each user may enter one or more hobbies (playing Guitar, chess, soccer, etc.), and each person looking to start a band, or looking for a replacement guitarist, interested in arranging a soccer match, or looking for a chess mate can use the system of the present invention to search for

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them. As with service providers, such hobbies information already exists in many social networks (e.g. in the form of Fan pages in Facebook).

According to an embodiment of the invention, the results of the search should be sorted (or sortable) by relevant parameters, like: physical proximity, time constraints and availability, prior transactions etc.

The described system and method of the present invention allows a user to search and evaluate information based on endorsement or recommendations obtained from one or more members of that user in one or more social networks or other internet application(s). Furthermore, it also allows a user to search and evaluate information by the mere fact that a certain friend is a friend of someone (e.g. Service Provider, so that service provider can be evaluated based on friendship with someone, without that someone having to actively endorse him) or has performed certain activity (e.g. bought certain product himself, and since that someone is trusted or has similar taste, the mere fact the buying the product is associated with him helps to evaluate it), or has a certain hobby, or friends with some who has a certain hobby, etc. For example, in such scenario, no necessarily there is a need for any active endorsement of recommendation. In general, evaluation of information is both based on active endorsement by members, or the mere fact that certain information came from the members themselves, or somehow assigned to them so the information can be evaluated by evaluating the connection between one and his contacts.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the system and method also allow advertising a service provider (by sending recommendation requests), wherein the user who conduct a search for a service provider can find the service provider in the provided search results following the

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recommendation link. The advertising of a service/product can be obtained by: a) creating a social link of some kind between a service provider or a product vendor, and a person who used said service or product; wherein said person is a member in social network(s) of a registered user; b) initiating said social link by said service provider/product vendor or by said person; and c) presenting said initiated social link on a search performed by said user, thereby allowing said user to know which persons who are members of his own social network(s) made use of said service or product. In that way, the Service Provider can enlarge his exposure to potential clients, in a personal trusted manner.

In general, the system of the present invention is designed for finding (and for endorsing) service providers, product vendors, products or other personal information (such as hobbies, dating status, etc.)

While some embodiments of the invention have been described by way of illustration, it will be apparent that the invention can be carried into practice with many modifications, variations and adaptations, and with the use of numerous equivalents or alternative solutions that are within the scope of persons skilled in the art, without departing from the spirit of the invention or exceeding the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

1. A system for allowing a user to search and evaluate information based on the fact that said information is held by or endorsed by one or more members of said user in one or more social networks or other internet application(s), comprising:
 - a) a client application operated from a user terminal thereby allowing said user to interact with said system;
 - b) one or more social network adapters each of which is used for interacting with a particular social network for retrieving information and manipulating said particular social network, including generating and sending messages to members of social network(s), and retrieving relevant profile information in return;
 - c) a data module for storing information related to each user of said system and to one or more of their members in said social network(s), said data module is accessible by said client application;
 - d) a search engine module for performing the search for information, either within said data module or within said social networks via said network adapters or both; and
 - e) a client interface module for retrieving or storing information accessible by said system according to the activities of said user via said client application.

2. A system according to claim 1, in which the search results are based on the user's members' (of N degree) opinion/experience in relation to the sought information, thus said search results can be better evaluated by said user based on his familiarity and appreciation of the one or more specific members specific search result is based on.

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3. A system according to claim 1, in which the social network adapters, the data module, the client interfaces module, and the search engine module are located within a server connected to the social network(s) or other internet application(s).
4. A system according to claim 1, further comprises an indexer module for mining all users of said system and for exporting and storing some or all related information in the data module.
5. A system according to claim 1, further comprises internal messaging module for communicating with users of said system.
6. A system according to claim 1, further comprises external communication module(s) for allowing the alternative communication channels with users of said system.
7. A system according to claim 6, in which the external communication module(s) communication modules are selected from the group consisting of: Email Module, SMS Module, Instant Messaging Module or combinations thereof.
8. A system according to claim 1, further comprises 3rd Parties Interface Module(s) for interfacing with additional 3rd parties systems.
9. A system according to claim 8, in which the 3rd Parties Interface Module(s) is an interface for geographical data supplying service, thereby providing geographical related information to said system.
10. A system according to claim 1, in which the data module comprises:

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- a) a plurality of records, each of which being associated with the user of said system and any members of said user in any social network, wherein each record includes the connection(s) in any social network between said user and members of the user's social network by degrees of separation and by common contacts,
 - b) an interface means for receiving pertinent data, according to at least one desired search criterion from the service user; and
 - c) a processing module for comparing the stored comparable criteria and the at least one desired criterion, and for extracting relevant result(s) from the database on the basis of the comparison.
11. A system according to claim 10, in which the user is registered to said system in any way, either directly or indirectly.
 12. A system according to claim 10, in which the user is a service provider/product vendor/products, wherein the plurality of records includes said service provider/product vendor/products profile together with a plurality of comparable criteria indicative of the attributes of said service provider/product vendor/products.
 13. A system according to claim 10, in which the data module contains recommendations of service providers / product vendor / products by members of the user's social network, wherein the recommendation creates a substantial link between one or more of said service providers / product vendor / products and said user, wherein said substantial link is taken into consideration along with existing social links while a search is being performed.
 14. A system according to claim 10, in which the plurality of records includes tables for mapping between a UserID of the user in said

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system to any other identification or ID of said user in any other social network, thereby allowing to link between members of said user in any social network(s), thus enabling a cross-social-networks search, while members of each user are searched in all social networks said user is associated to along with internal connections in said system.

15. A system according to claim 10, in which the plurality of records includes data related to information provided by the user or members of said user, such as reviewing data, ratings, likes, work history, etc. regarding a certain service provider/product vendor/product.
16. A system according to claim 1, further comprises a software component which attaches itself to existing sites, thereby allowing the search engine module to search with said existing sites, and/or filter information in said existing sites to show only information produced/edited by members of viewer, and/or associate information in said existing sites with members of viewers.
17. A system according to claim 16, in which the software component allows users to add information (such as comments or reviews or personal notes) to existing sites under their names/identities or associate information in existing sites with their names/identities in their social networks or said system.
18. A system according to claim 16, in which the software component allows users to rank/rate certain existing data in existing websites.
19. A system according to claim 18, in which while browsing to existing sites the software component allows users to see "subjective" ranking

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regarding items in existing websites composed of single ranking made by user's own members.

20. A computer implementation method within a system for allowing a user to search and evaluate information based on the fact that this information is held by or endorsed by one or more members of said user in one or more social networks or other internet application(s), comprising:
- a) Executing a client application on a user terminal for allowing said user to search and evaluate information and to generally communicate with said system;
 - b) Interacting with social network(s) for retrieving information and manipulating said social network(s) via social network adapter(s);
 - c) Storing information related to each user of said system and to one or more of their members in said social network(s), said information is stored within a data module which is accessible by said client application;
 - d) upon request from said client application, performing search for information, either within said data module or within said social network(s) or within both, wherein the search is performed by a search engine module; and
 - e) retrieving or storing information accessible by said system according to the activities of said user via said client application.
21. A method according to claim 20, wherein in the activities of the user are selected from the group consisting of: conducting a search, recommending, sending a recommendation request, approving or denying a recommendation request, notifying system of someone as holding\conducting a certain profession\hobby\business\etc., approving or denying such claim, receiving an endorsement, actively

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seeking an endorsement, renewing an endorsement, selecting a service provider\product vendor\person holding a certain hobby\etc. from a plurality of service providers \ product vendors \ members \ etc., messaging any contact between user and service provider \ product vendors \ members \ etc, messaging any service provider \ product vendors \ members \ etc, mining and evaluating of certain kinds of information, "subjective" ranking a service provider \ product vendors \ products \ etc, calculating and presenting ranking information using the registered user's own social network, creating or updating a profile, and any combination thereof.

22. A method according to claim 21, wherein the user can send a recommendation by himself.
23. A method according to claim 21, wherein the actively seeking of an endorsement, comprising:
 - a) Sending an electronic endorsement request (aka Recommendation Request) to at least one entity by a registered user via said client application; and whereby upon receiving said endorsement by said entity,
 - b) Verifying said endorsement by the entity receiving said Recommendation Request by clicking on a link representing said endorsement request, thereby endorsing said request of said user by said entity wherein said endorsement is visible on the internet or other electronic media.
24. A method according to claim 23, wherein the entity is the registered user himself, other registered user or non-registered entity.

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25. A method according to claim 23, wherein the Recommendation Request is sent in several ways including: an existing social network messaging mechanism, SMS, Email, system internal messaging mechanism or combinations thereof.
26. A method according to claim 23, wherein the endorsements can be severed and renewed by the entity after a certain time has passed since the last verified endorsement.
27. A method according to claim 21, wherein the selecting of a service provider from a plurality of service providers for the performance of a job, comprising:
 - a) entering keywords for conducting a search for said service provider via the client application of a user; and, in return
 - b) receiving information according to said keywords and the data incorporating the members of the social network(s) of said register user with the attributes of the keywords provided.
28. A method according to claim 21, wherein the mining and evaluation of certain kinds of information comprising scanning the user' own social network for said information.
29. A method according to claim 20, in which the activities comprises allowing a service provider or a product vendor to advertise themselves in a subjective or word-of-mouth manner, to actively seek endorsements, to utilize social networks, and friends/contact therein for advertising, etc.

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30. A method according to claim 20, wherein the results of the search are sorted and/or filtered by relevant parameters, such as: physical proximity, time constraints and availability, prior transactions etc.
31. A method according to claim 20, further comprising producing a log of transactions made in relation to the search.
32. A method according to claim 20, further comprising segmenting the search according to groups the user is a part of.
33. A method according to claim 20, further comprising utilizing information already exists in social networks including contacts and other data, such as profession, hobbies, etc.
34. A method according to claim 20, in which the activities further comprises allowing a user to declare that a certain person is a professional of some sort.
35. A method according to claim 20, further comprising advertising a service/product by:
 - a) creating a social link of some kind between a service provider or a product vendor, and a person who used said service or product; wherein said person is a member in social network(s) of a registered user;
 - b) initiating said social link by said service provider/product vendor or by said person; and
 - c) presenting said initiated social link on a search performed by said user, thereby allowing said user to know which persons who are members of his own social network(s) made use of said service or

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product. In that way, the Service Provider can enlarge his exposure to potential clients, in a personal trusted manner.

36. A method according to claim 21, in which the "subjective" rankings is calculated by a mechanism which takes into account only the ranking given to the sought information by or through the user's members.
37. A method according to claim 36, in which the mechanism for calculating the subjective ranking uses different weights for members in different degrees of separation or members belonging to a certain group(s).
38. A method according to claim 36, in which the mechanism for calculating subjective ranking uses different weights for ranking depending on their creation time.

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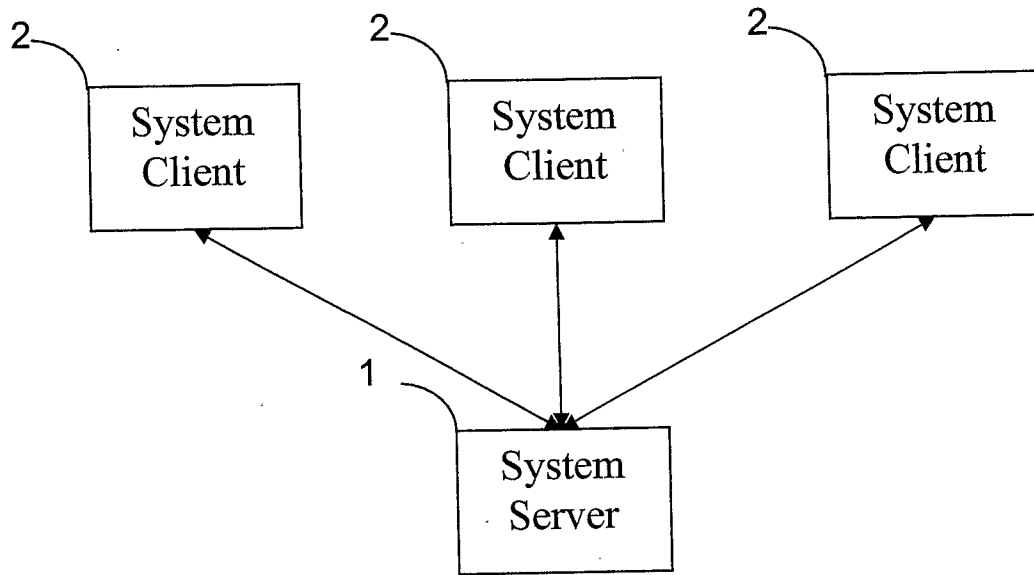


Fig. 1

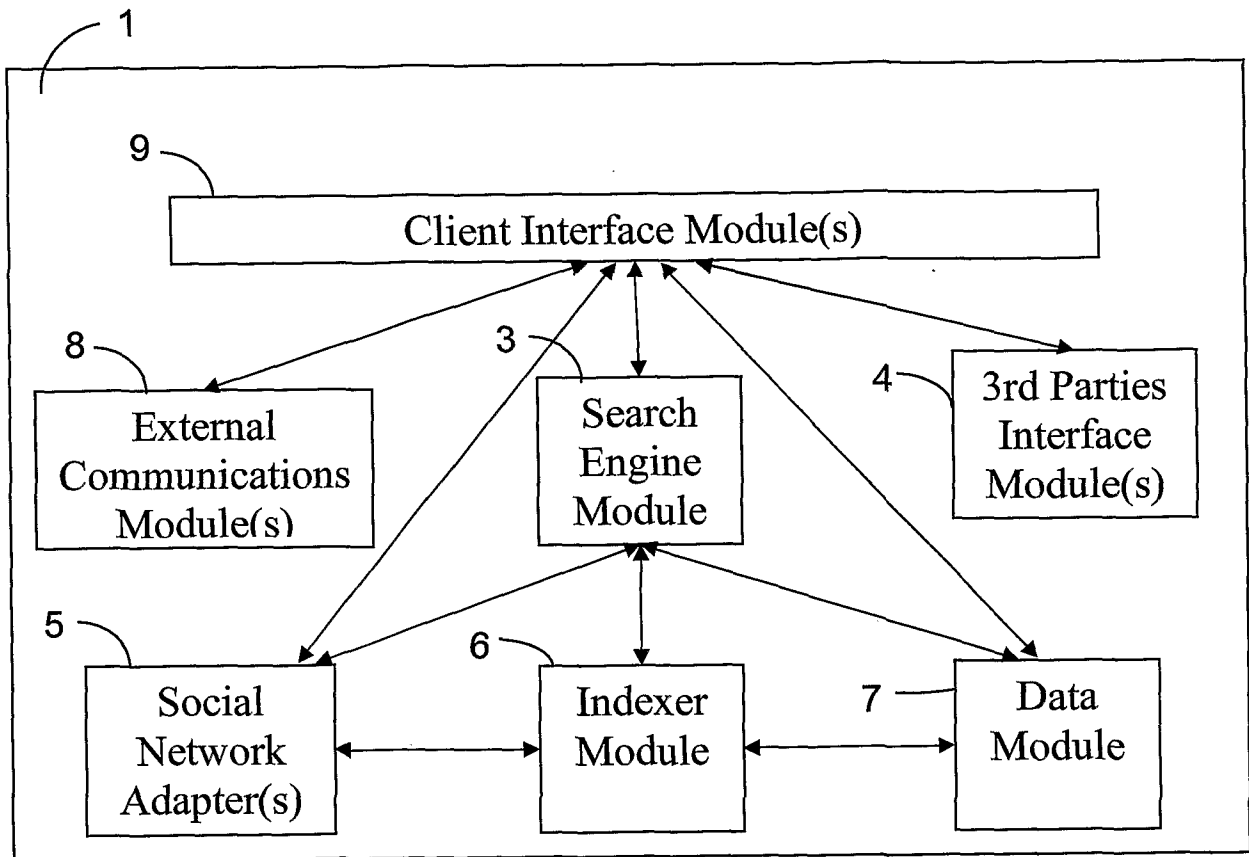


Fig. 2

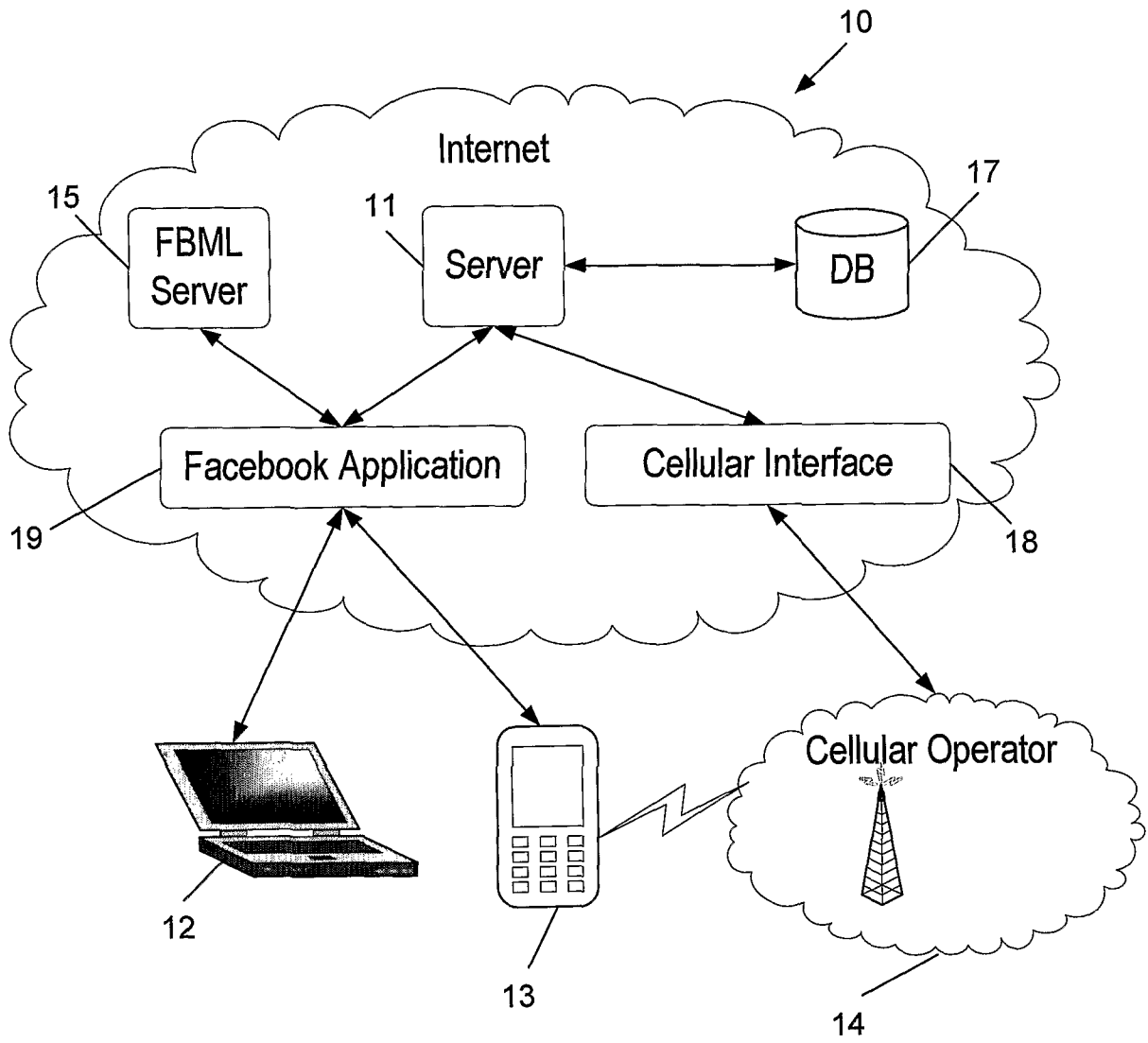


Fig. 3

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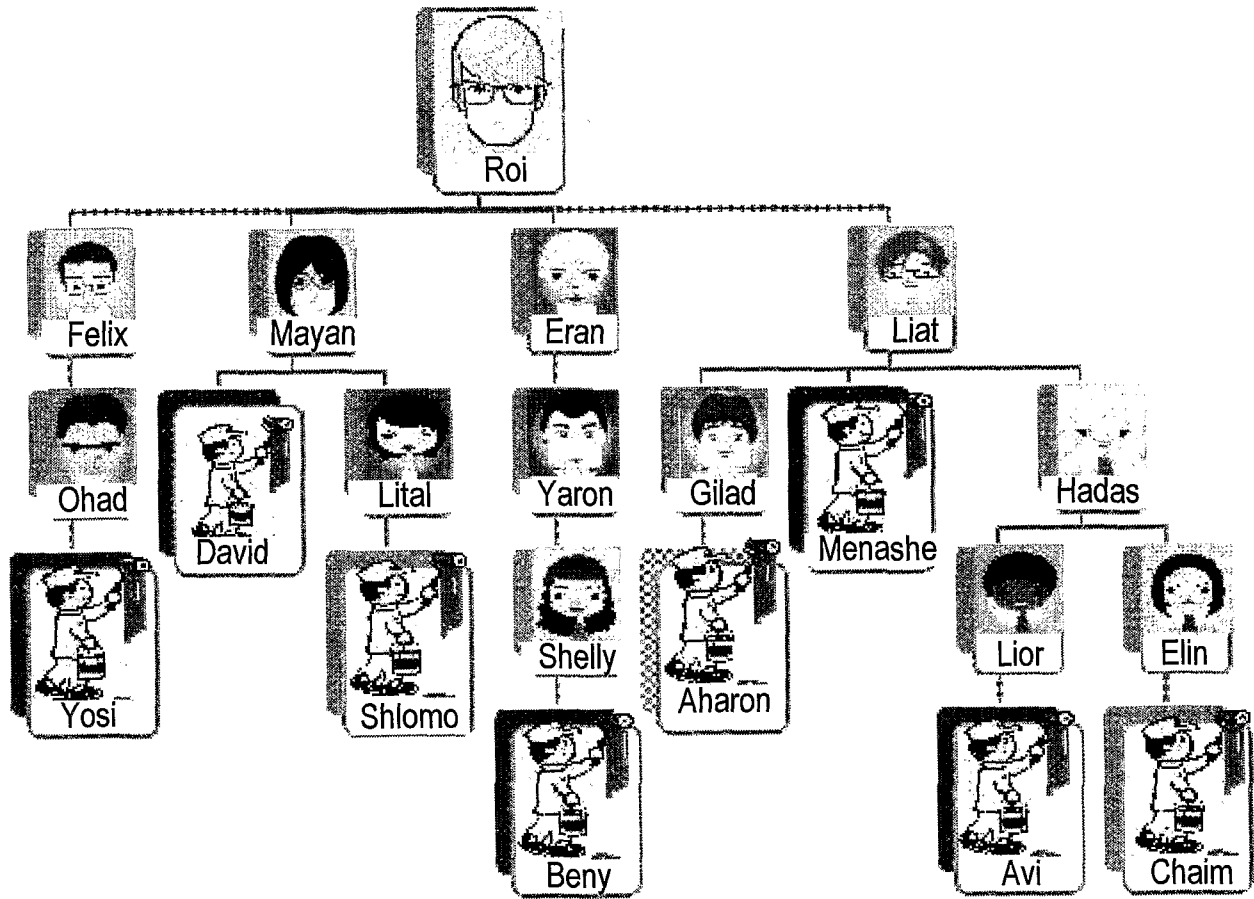
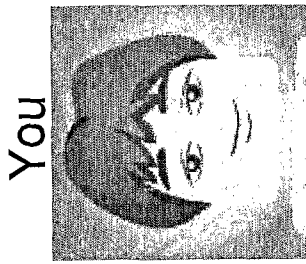


Fig. 4A



You

- Sort by: 0 5
- Geo (km) |||||
- Connections 👤
- Likes 👍

	10km 5 10	Roth Gibson		50km 5 10	Robert Church		5km 5 10	Jeki Moor		
	5km 5 10	Maily timber		5km 5 10	Roby mickel		5km 5 10	Robert Church		5km 5 10
	5km 5 10	Robert Church		5km 5 10	Nina Blomphild		5km 5 10	Robert Church		5km 5 10

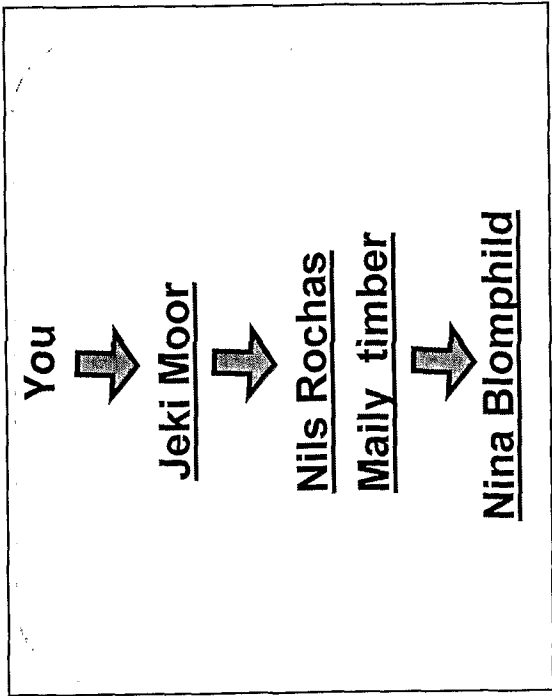
Fig. 4B

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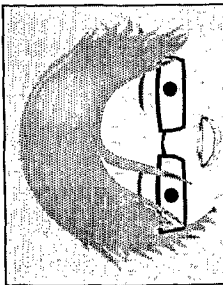
Profession: Physician
 Expertise: Dentist
 Service location: At office + house-calls
 Country: Israel
 City: Tel-Aviv
 Street: Ben-Yehoda
 Number: 44

Description of Nina's profession

Do you like Nina?
 Would you recommend Nina?



Send message



Nina Blomphild
 20
 26

How you're connected to Nina:

My Professionals

Fig. 4C

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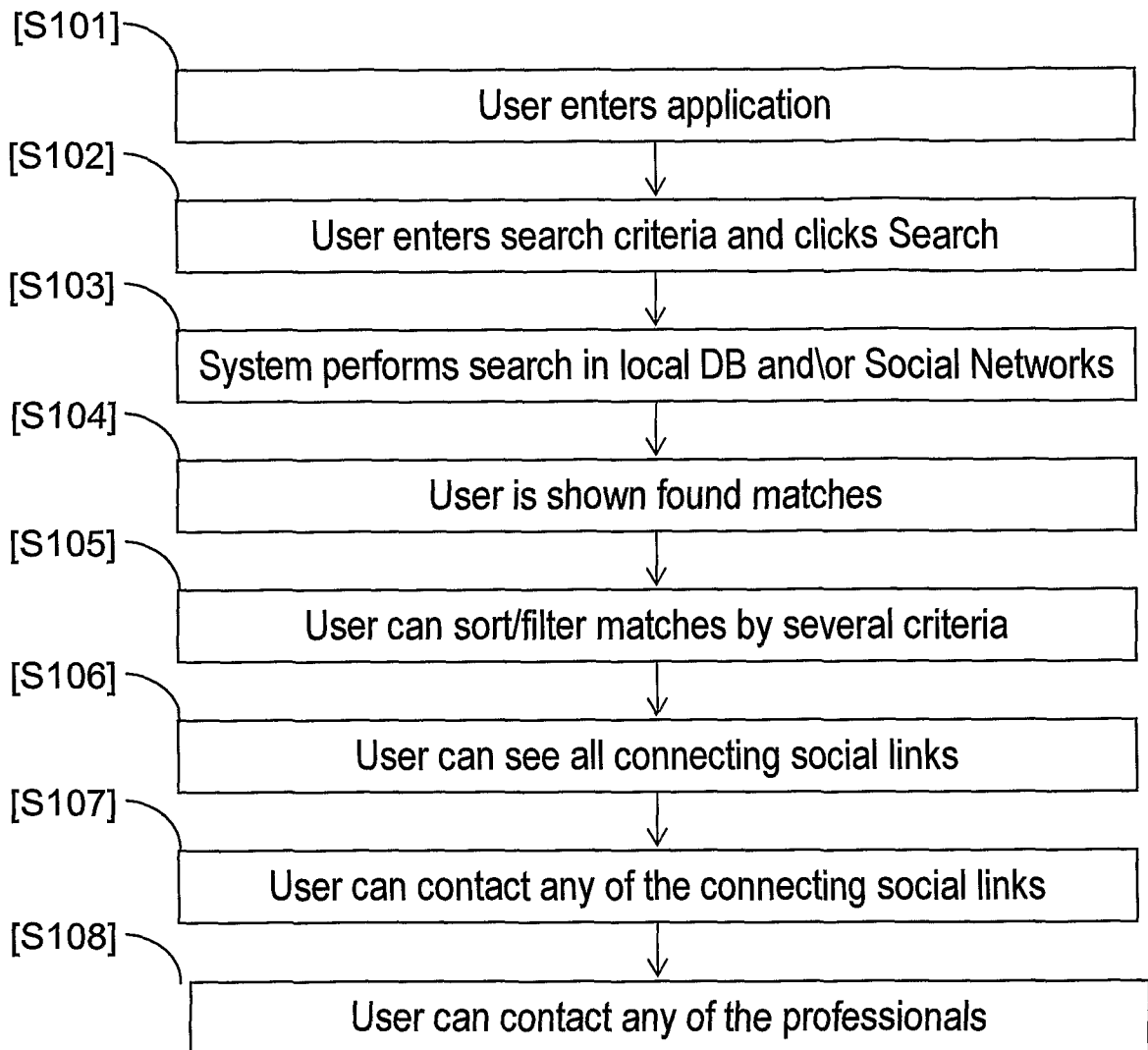


Fig. 5

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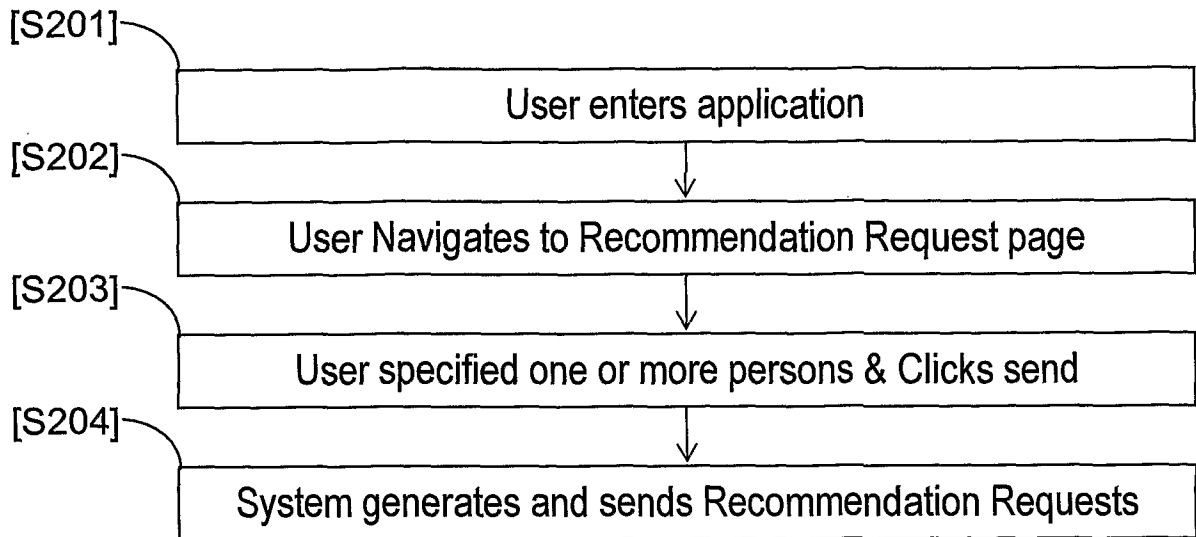


Fig. 6

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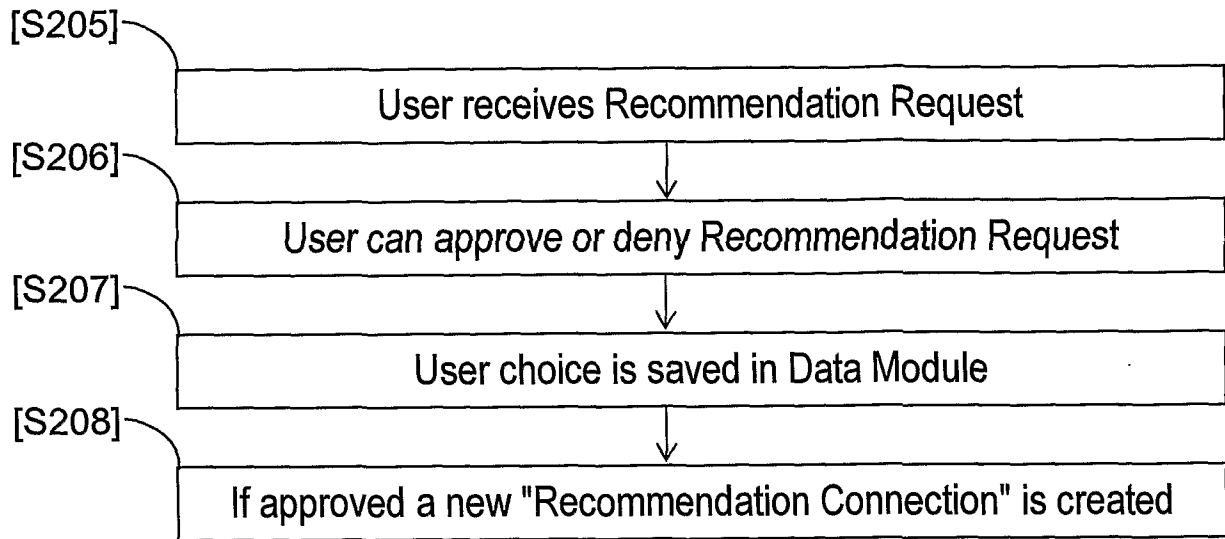


Fig. 7

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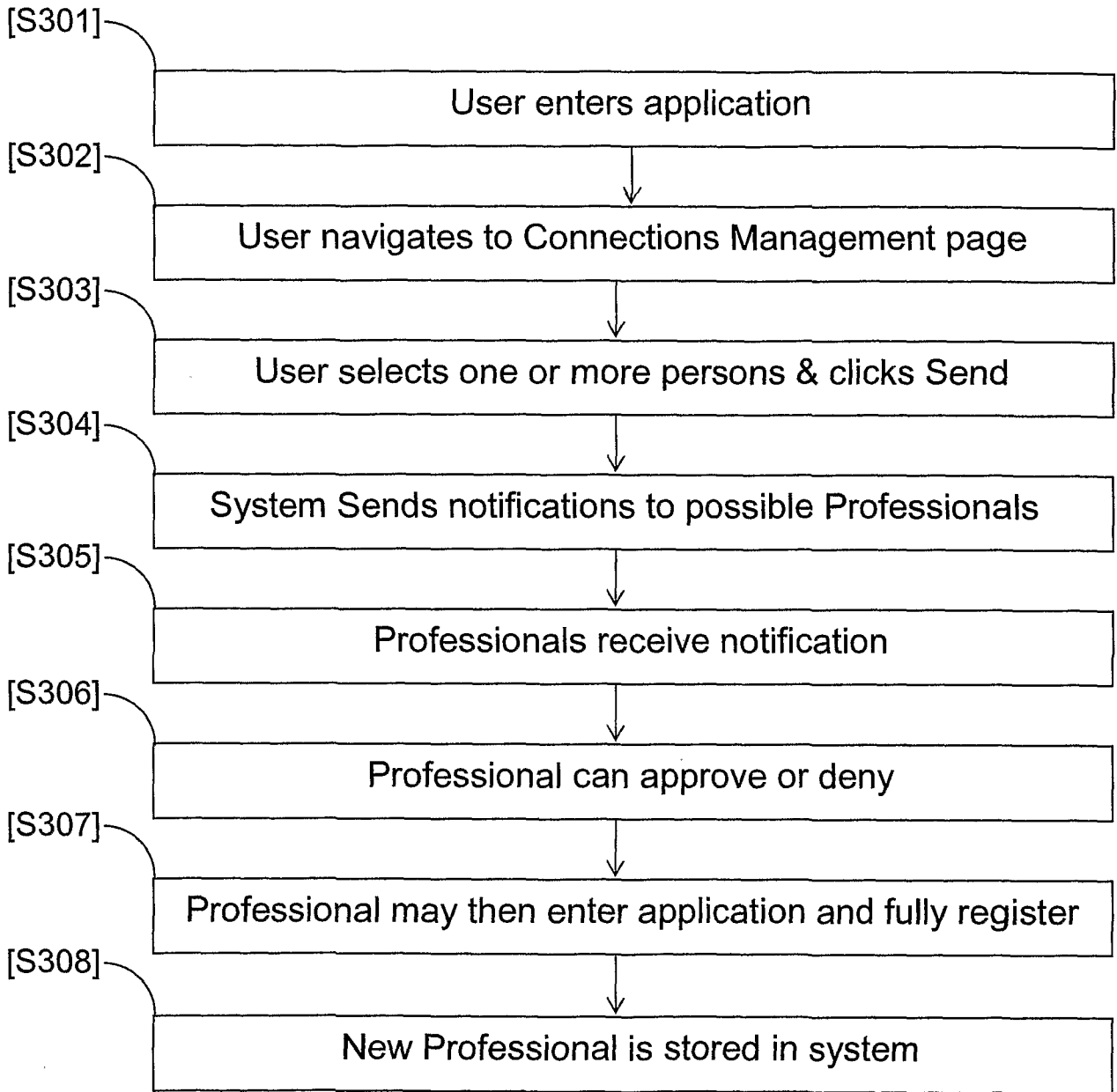


Fig. 8

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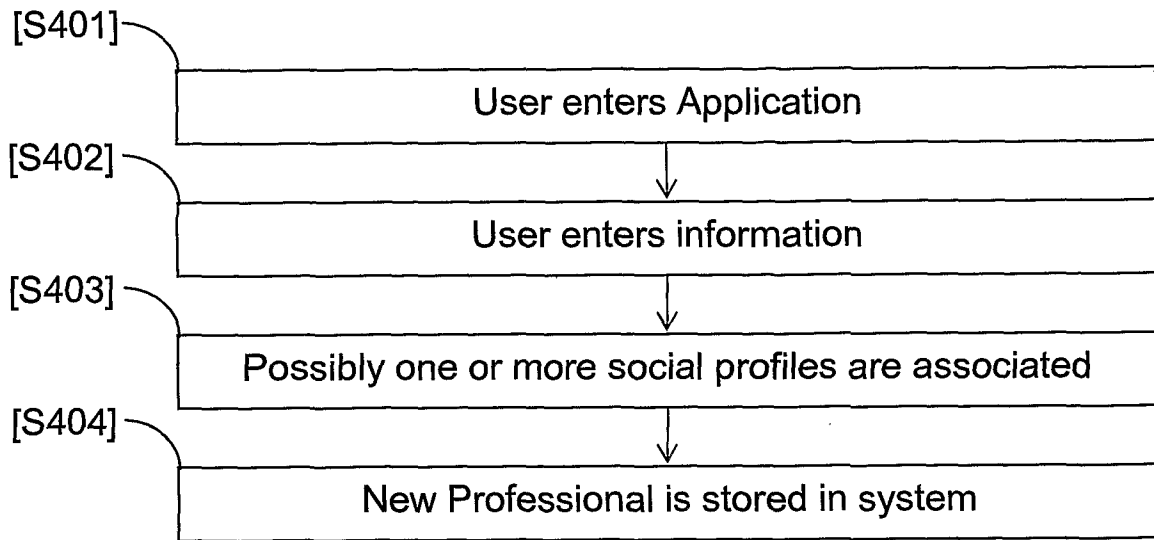


Fig. 9

My Professionals

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Profession	Expertise	Name	R.Date	C.Type
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Roth Gibson	1.8.10	RR
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Robert Church		f
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Jeki Moor		f
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Robert Silverman	5.5.09	RR
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Adrian Huber	3.9.09	RR
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Sophie Bridges	4.6.10	RR
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physician	Jonathan Taylor		

Fig. 10

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Users Table

Column Name	Column Type	Comment
User ID	Integer	Identity column, automatic row numbering. Represents our internal user ID.
Email	String	The User's email address
Password	String	[Option] The User's password (relevant only for service providers)
Facebook ID	String	[Optional] The ID of the user in Facebook
User Type	Integer	The type of user-regular, service provider
User Profession	Integer	The profession of the user, mapped to the <i>Professions</i> table
User Speciality	Integer	[Optional] The speciality of the user, mapped from the <i>Profession Specialities</i> table
User Thumbnail	String	[Optional] A link to a thumbnail for that user (appears in search results etc).
User Location ID	Integer	The location of the user. Mapped to the <i>User Location</i> table

Fig. 11

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User Friends Table

Column Name	Column Type	Comment
Row ID	Integer	Unique Identifier, identity column
User ID	Integer	The user ID, mapped to the User ID field in the <i>Users</i> table.
Friend ID	Integer	The user ID of the friend (in the case the friend is using the application)
Friend Facebook ID	String	The Facebook ID of the friend in the case the user is not using the application

Fig. 12

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/IL 10/00680

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - G06F 9/46, G06F 15/02 (2010.01)

USPC - 705/9

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

USPC:705/9

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

USPC: 705/1.1, 7, 8, 9; 707/705, 736, 752, 999.001, 999.007; 463/1, 40, 42 (keyword limited; terms below)

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

Electronic Database Searched: PubWEST(PGPB, USPT, EPAB, JPAB), Google Scholar

Search Terms Used: social, community, networking, website, web, page, site, portal, facebook, myspace, search, find, query, retrieve, look, for, recommend, favorite, endorse, like, suggest, common, high rate, friend, buddy, member, user, subscriber, customer, people

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X -- Y	US 2007/0203906 A1 (CONE et al.) 30 August 2007 (30.08.2007) entire document, especially Abstract; para [0015], [0025]-[0030], [0032]-[0039], [0044], [0045], [0047]-[0050], [0056]-[0061], [0066], [0068], [0069], [0074]-[0076], [0078]-[0086], [0096]-[0102], [0105], [0107]-[0117], [0127], [0128], [0137], [0140], [0142], [0144], [0147]-[0159], [0177]-[0180], [0182]-[0187], [0191]-[0194], [0196]; Fig. 1-6	1-7, 10, 11, 13, 15-22, 27-38 ----- 12, 14, 26
X -- Y	US 2009/0164929 A1 (CHEN et al.) 25 June 2009 (25.06.2009) entire document, especially Abstract; para [0004]-[0005], [0015], [0020], [0022]-[0026], [0030]-[0038], [0040]-[0043], [0045]-[0047], [0054]-[0056], [0065]-[0069], [0074]-[0076], [0095]; Figs. 1-7	1, 8, 9, 20, 21, 23-25 ----- 14, 26
Y	US 2008/0140566 A1 (CHOWINS) 12 June 2008 (12.06.2008) entire document, especially Abstract; para [0014], [0015], [0067], [0085]; Figs. 3E-3F	12
A	US 2009/0192871 A1 (DEACON et al.) 30 July 2009 (30.07.2009) entire document	1-38
A	US 2008/0288494 A1 (BROGGER et al.) 20 November 2008 (20.11.2008) entire document	1-38

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&" document member of the same patent family
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search
10 December 2010 (10.12.2010)

Date of mailing of the international search report
20 DEC 2010

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Authorized officer:
Lee W. Young
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