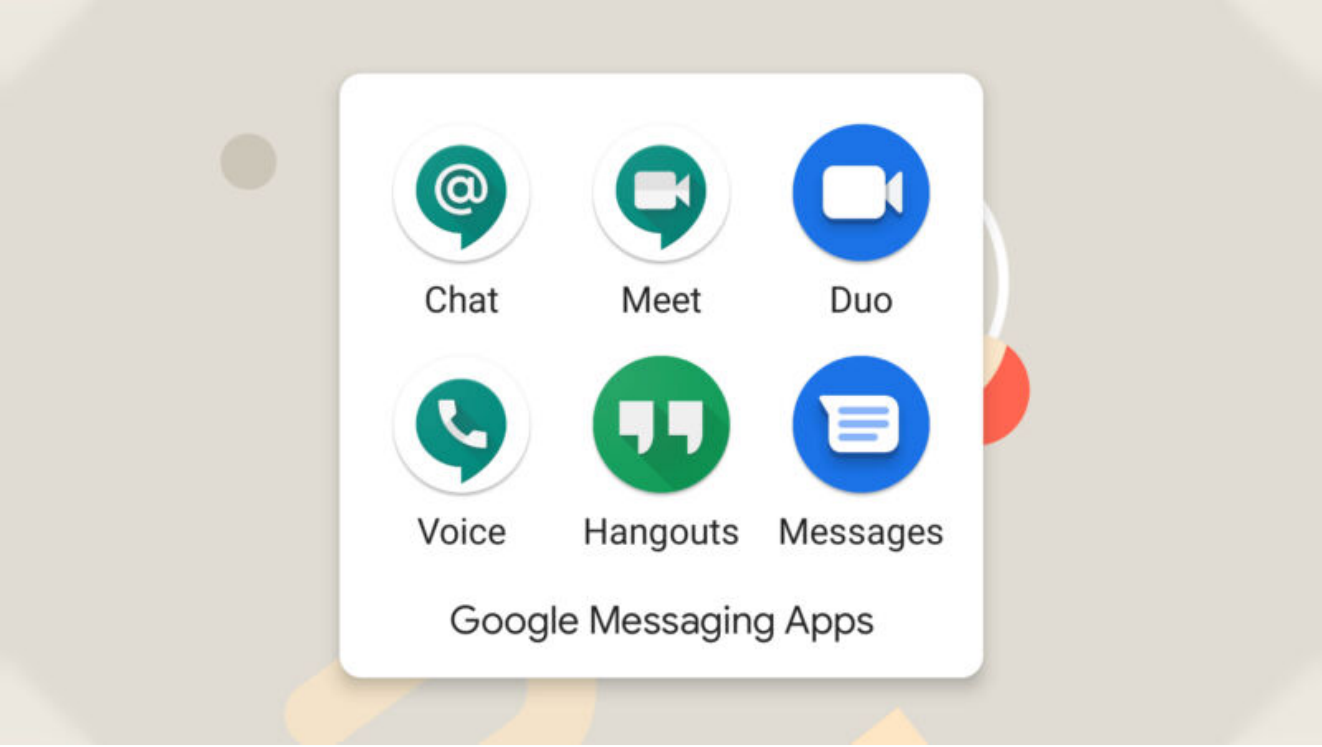
Google unifies messenger teams, plans “more coherent vision”



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Unity is coming to Google’s messaging strategy—again. A report from The Verge details a shakeup in Google’s messaging leadership that will see Javier Soltero, the VP and GM of G Suite, take charge of all of Google’s messaging apps in a single “unified team.”

A Google statement says Soltero will be in charge of “all of Google’s collective communication products,” which presumably means Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Google Chat, Google

Messages, Google Duo, and Google Voice. Oddly, the report also lists “Android phone app” as one of Soltero’s new responsibilities. Here’s Google’s full statement.

> *We are bringing all of Google’s collective communication products together under one leader and unified team that will be led by Javier Soltero, VP and GM of G Suite. Javier will remain in Cloud, but will also join the leadership team under Hiroshi Lockheimer, SVP of Platforms and Ecosystems. Outside of this update, there are no other changes to the personnel and Hiroshi will continue to play a significant role in our ongoing partnership efforts.*

Soltero only joined Google in October of last year. Previously, he created the Acompli email app, which Microsoft acquired in 2014 and turned into the Outlook mobile app. After speaking to Soltero, The Verge comes away with what seems to be conflicting statements on the future of Google’s messaging apps. On one hand, the report says Google has “no immediate plans to change or integrate any of Google’s apps,” but when speaking of Google’s consumer messaging apps, it also quotes Soltero as saying, “The plan continues to be to modernize all of that towards Google Meet and Google Chat.”

Hiroshi Lockheimer, who has a major role at Google as the SVP of Chrome and Android and is now Soltero’s boss, spoke to The Verge about the transition, too. “It’s not necessarily a bad thing that there are multiple communications applications if they’re for a different purpose,” Lockheimer told the site. “Part of what might be confusing, what we’ve done to confuse everyone, is our history around some of our communications products that have gone from one place or another place. But we’re looking forward now, in a way that has a much more coherent vision.”

Like all Google messaging products and initiatives, an all-powerful “Head of messaging” is a re-re-re-re-reboot of

something Google has done before. Around 2016, Google messaging was unified under Nick Fox, who, for a time, was “VP of communications products,” which covered Hangouts, Project Fi, and Google’s WebRTC efforts. The big move to happen under Fox’s watch was the launch of Google Allo, which didn’t unify anything and just added yet another messenger to Google’s lineup. Allo was shut down after a year and a half, and today, Fox isn’t in charge of messaging anymore.

Google Hangouts itself was also supposed to be a great unifier. Around 2013, Hangouts combined Google Talk, Google+ Messenger, Android’s SMS app, and Google Voice into a single app. For a time, Hangouts actually achieved this Google messaging utopia, but Google eventually lost interest in maintaining the app and kept fragmenting the user base by launching new messaging apps.

We’re not getting much concrete information from this announcement about what the future of Google messaging holds. Aligning all of the messaging apps under the G Suite division does seem to line up with a rumor that claimed the G Suite team was planning a “new unified communications app” that would bring in functions from Gmail, Drive, Google Chat, and Google Meet, all with the purpose of fighting enterprise communication apps like Microsoft Teams and Slack.

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