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What's happened? Meta has announced a new messaging feature for Whatsapp users that will allow people to chat with users of third-party messaging apps. This update is part of compliance with the Digital Markets Act (DMA) in Europe, which requires interoperability. The rollout begins with two partner services, BirdyChat and Haiket, which will support text, image, voice, video, and file exchanges with Whatsapp users. Users will be able to opt in through a new settings toggle and can choose whether to display these messages in a separate "Third-party chats" folder or their main inbox. Meta says end-to-end encryption will remain intact, as partner apps are required to meet the same security standards as Whatsapp. The rollout will start "over the coming months" in Europe for both Android and iOS. Meta This is important because: It breaks Whatsapp's long-standing "walled garden" model by letting users chat with people on different apps, potentially reducing the need to install a separate service just to chat with specific contacts. By complying with the DMA's interoperability requirement, Meta is taking a significant step that may reshape how messaging apps function in Europe and possibly beyond. Meta is signaling that privacy won't take a backseat to interoperability by ensuring that partner apps meet Whatsapp's encryption standards. Why should I care? This update could make messaging a lot less frustrating if you live in Europe. People using other messaging apps can reach you on Whatsapp, without you needing to download their app at all. Smaller messaging apps may become easier to use because their users can contact Whatsapp's huge base without everyone downloading yet another app. OK, what's next? Whatsapp is preparing a set of updates to make the app safer and easier to use. You may soon get stronger protection against scams, a single place to view recently shared media from all chats, and the option to use the same username you have on Instagram. Users should watch for the toggle in Whatsapp settings as opting in is required, and third-party chats may have slightly different privacy terms. Keep an eye out to see if Meta expands support beyond Europe and includes more of the best messaging apps apart from the initial partners. Manisha likes to cover technology that is a part of everyday life, from smartphones & apps to gaming & streaming... It's official, ads are coming to WhatsApp. However, depending on how you use the popular messaging app, you may never see one. Hot on the heels of the welcome addition of a proper WhatsApp iPad App, WhatsApp has confirmed it's introducing ads to the platform alongside a couple of other features for businesses and channels to utilise. Read more WhatsApp is reportedly working on a new feature that will allow users to create a username for their account, eliminating the need to show their phone number when connecting with other users. The feature, first reported by WABetaInfo (via Tecnoblog), was spotted in the code of a recent iOS update released via the TestFlight beta Program. WABetaInfo noted that the feature is currently in development and is not yet available for beta testing. Read more Meta has been playing the AI game for a while now, but unlike ChatGPT, its models are usually integrated into existing platforms rather than standalone apps. That trend ends today -- the company has launched the Meta AI app and it appears to do everything ChatGPT does and more. Powered by the latest Llama 4 model, the app is designed to "get to know you" using the conversations you have and information from your public Meta profiles. It's designed to work primarily with voice, and Meta says it has improved responses to feel more personal and conversational. There's experimental voice tech included too, which you can toggle on and off to test -- the difference is that apparently, full-duplex speech technology generates audio directly, rather than reading written responses. Read more