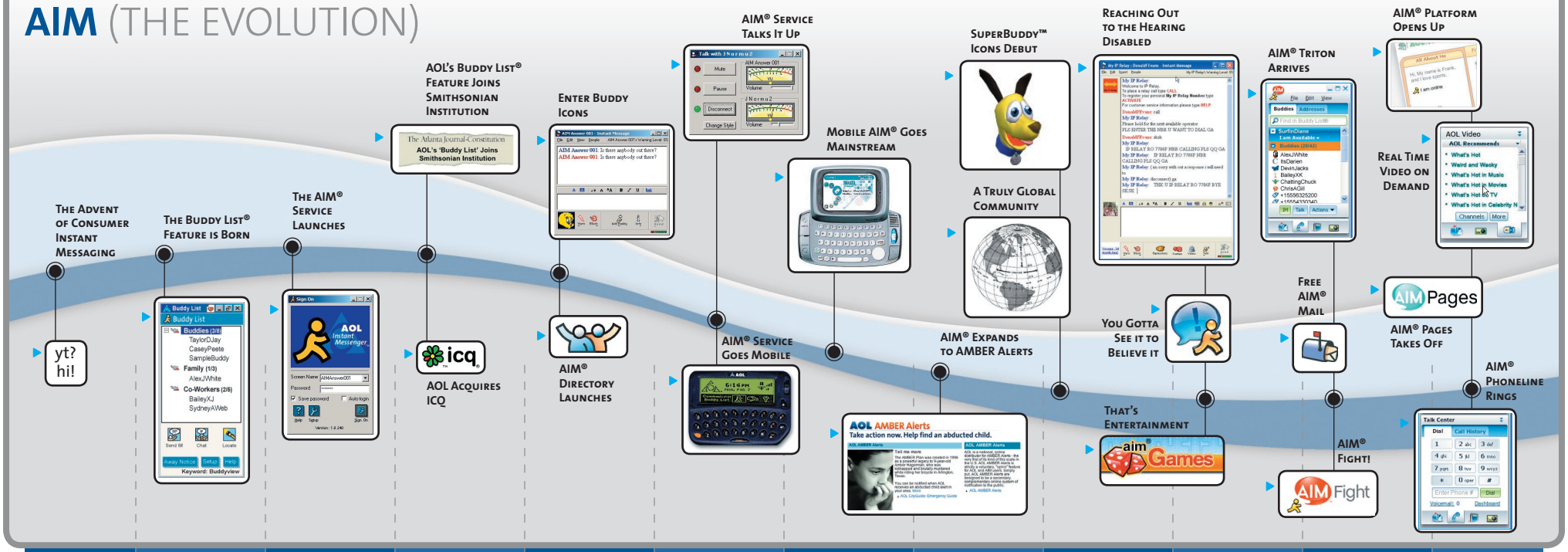
AIM (THE EVOLUTION)



1989 - The Advent of Consumer Instant Messaging
AOL introduces consumer instant messaging (IM), pioneering a trend that would change the face of online communications. In addition to email, consumers can now send and receive real time text communications, previously available only on private networks.

1996 - The Buddy List® Feature is Born
The Buddy List® feature launches on the AOL® 3.0 service. This AOL innovation revolutionized IM by letting AOL® members organize their "buddies" and see who was online and able to receive messages, jump-starting America's most powerful online community. While aspects of the feature have been copied by others, AOL's Buddy List network supports the nation's largest IM community.

1997 - The AIM® Service Launches
The free and public AIM® service launches, bringing the benefits of IM and the Buddy List feature to a Web-wide audience.

1998 - AOL's Buddy List® Feature Joins Smithsonian Institution
The Smithsonian recognizes AOL's Buddy List network as a remarkable social achievement. AOL's Buddy List network enters the Smithsonian Institution's permanent research collection on Information Technology Innovation at the National Museum of American History.

1998 - AOL Acquires ICQ
AOL purchases the pioneering ICQ® service, the first free IM service on the Web, which debuted in November 1996.

1999 - Enter Buddy Icons
By this time, AIM had already spawned its own language and emoticons. The launch of Buddy icons marks the first generation of self-expression features for personalizing IMs. The first Buddy icons are cartoon characters, symbols, drawings and graphical images.

1999 - AIM® Directory Launches
Bringing in the second wave of IM-based social networking features (after the Buddy List feature), the AIM® Community Directory makes it possible for users to create a personal profile and search by topic to find other people with common interests.

2000 - AIM® Service Talks it Up
The AIM service debuts a host of new features, including "AIM®Talk," the first means of voice communications between AIM users (PC-to-PC), and "Instant Images," the first easy way for users to exchange photos and images via IM.

2000 - AIM® Service Goes Mobile
AOL launches the mobile AIM service on the Sprint cellular network and introduces the AOL® Mobile Communicator, a wireless handheld device that enables on-the-go access to the AIM and AOL® Mail services. It is instantly embraced by the deaf and hard of hearing community.

2001 - Mobile AIM® Goes Mainstream
The mobile AIM service becomes a "killer app" on T-Mobile's popular new Sidekick® phone. It also rolls out across major wireless networks nationwide and is embedded on popular new phones.

2002 - AIM® expands to AMBER Alerts
Through a joint effort with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and law enforcement agencies, AOL expands AMBER Alerts to AIM users to help in rescuing abducted children.

2003 - SuperBuddy™ Icons Debut
Animated 3-D SuperBuddy™ icons launch for AOL members.

2003 - A Truly Global Community
AOL brings the AIM and ICQ services together, forming one of the largest online communities in the world and transferring two billion IMs every day. The ICQ service appears in CNET's Hall of Fame as one of the most popular, high quality, and time tested Internet applications in history.

2004 - Reaching Out to the Hearing Disabled
The AIM® Relay Service launches, enabling AIM users who are deaf, hard of hearing and speech disabled to access live relay operators directly from the Buddy List feature. The 3GSM Association names the new service the "Best Use of Mobile for Special Needs & Accessibility."

2004 - You Gotta See it to Believe it
The AIM service delivers live video IM, enabling AIM users to engage in live streaming audio and video conversations with other AIM users, as well as Apple iChat AV users on Macintosh computers.

2004 - That's Entertainment
AOL® Radio and AIM® Games debut on the Buddy List feature, bringing content and a new level of interactivity to IM.

2005 - Free AIM® Mail
The free AIM® Mail service launches, giving AIM users the ability to use their AIM® Screen Name as their email address. Leveraging one of the most popular brands on the Web, AIM Mail offers AOL's industry-leading spam and virus protection as well as 2 GB storage.

2005 - AIM® Fight!
AIM® Fight launches at www.aimfight.com to let users compare the reach of their primary social network, the AIM Buddy List feature.

2005 - AIM® Triton Arrives
The new AIM® Triton service launches as a complete communications suite, with IM, email and SMS as well as voice and video chat services. An industry first, it features a Plaxo-enabled AIM® Address Book and offers one-click access to the AOL® Mail, AIM Mail and AOL Radio services, making the AIM service the new 'front door' to digital communications.

2006 - AIM® Platform Opens Up
AOL launches the Open AIM® initiative, enabling developers, online communities and sites and services of every kind to build new plug-ins and custom communications clients on the popular AIM platform.

2006 - Real Time Video on Demand
In another industry first, AOL tests a version of the AIM Triton service that features an AOL® Video module at the base of the Buddy List feature. The module offers video on demand categories like Weird & Wacky and What's Hot on TV.

2006 - AIM® Pages Takes Off
AOL begins to roll-out its new AIM® Pages community by inviting users to build personal Web pages that display their favorite music, videos, blogs, photos and more. Users can integrate Buddy List features and "subscribe" to others with shared interests.

2006 - AIM® Phoneline Rings
AOL launches AIM® Phoneline to give AIM users a free local phone number, unlimited inbound calling and an "always on" answering service. AOL also offers Unlimited AIM Phoneline, giving AIM users access to an inbound and outbound calling service that is e911 compliant and offers advanced call management.