

Founder of Social Network VK Pavel Durov Says Resignation as CEO was April Fools' Prank

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Pavel Durov, the founder of Russia's biggest social networking site, VK.

Just as the management of Russia's biggest social networking site VK was preparing to elect a new chief executive on Thursday, the website's founder Pavel Durov withdrew his resignation from the position, saying the joke was on those who had believed him.

The board of directors of VK, formerly known as V Kontakte, had been scheduled to convene on Thursday to elect a new CEO. But Durov, who announced his resignation on Apr. 1 in a farewell letter published on his personal VK page, said Thursday the move had been a prank.

“To those who thought I was actually resigning, happy April Fool's,” Durov said in a new post on his VK page on Thursday, alongside a picture of a smiling dog.

Two sources close to the company said Durov also sent the board of directors a letter

retracting his resignation on Wednesday night, Forbes.ru reported Thursday.

“Since it came to my knowledge that my resignation at this moment can create unnecessary risks for our company, I intend to remain and serve as the CEO,” said the letter, written in English.

United Capital Partners, which owns a 48 percent stake in VK, confirmed having received the letter but declined to comment further, Forbes reported.

In the initial farewell letter, Durov said he was quitting the post because he found it “increasingly complicated to stick to the principles we once founded our social site upon.”

“The CEO has significantly less freedom in managing the company after the changes occurred in the Vkontakte shareholders' structure in April 2013,” Durov said.

Durov's farewell letter had seemed to confirm reports of an ongoing Cold War between Durov and the company's management after United Capital Partners, owned by businessman Ilya Sherbovich, became the site's biggest shareholder in April 2013.

Critics have accused UCP of being a Kremlin-linked company and of taking over VK to oust Durov and make it yield to the authorities' demands. In December 2011, Durov refused to comply with the Federal Security Service's request to block the VK pages of several opposition-linked groups amid large-scale street protests against voting fraud in that year's parliamentary elections.

VK boasts 88 million registered users in Russia, far outstripping its U.S. rival Facebook, and 143 million users worldwide.

Billionaire Alisher Usmanov's USM Holdings, VK's second largest shareholder with a 40 percent stake, published a statement on Tuesday saying Durov had been forced to leave the company due to “enormous pressure exerted by one of the shareholders.”

“We are sure that Pavel [Durov] is not indifferent to the fate of Vkontakte and will continue to help. We wish him success,” the statement said, RBK reported.

Usmanov also bid Durov a personal farewell before Durov renounced his resignation. “I have supported and will continue to support Pavel Durov. I consider him to be a talented person and will do everything I can to ensure his relationship with Vkontakte continues,” Usmanov said.

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