Meet Legitimate, the aggregated news website that wants to combat online misinformation

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Caoimhe Donnelly, Head of Operations at Legitimate, about combatting online misinformation, building a technology for journalists, and weakening online trolls

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What was the catalyst for launching Legitimate?

We started _Legitimate_ after seeing so much disinformation being spread across the internet and through social media. Between the American elections and Covid, there was a lot of very _controversial and misleading news being spread_. These types of fake stories were being seen by millions of people, long before they could be fact-checked or verified. So we wanted to look for a solution.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work

with, how you reach customers and so on?

Legitimate is a platform mainly focused on journalists. It is free to use and we provide a suite of tools, including a content creation feature, growth tools, and a messaging function. We give each journalist a verified profile, which can then be used to verify their content and _help combat disinformation online_.

Our aim is to fight disinformation and build a community of journalists and content creators. We believe they should have easy access to the tools they need to be successful, whilst at the same time giving people confidence in what they read online. Legitimate could be gathering millions of articles each day based on hundreds of thousands of verified journalists.

Users can then follow the latest news and topics from their favourite journalists, news sources, and content creators; all with the reassurance that there are no fake posts or bad actors and that everything they see is traceable back to a person.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

We are currently pre-launch and will be officially launching in late spring. The platform has evolved quite a lot from the original concept.

We realised that there was not a lot of technology being designed with journalists in mind. We worked with a whole host of partners, from journalists, to university journalism schools, to publications in order to develop a free set of tools that would add value to the industry.

In the past few weeks, we've also been working with politicians. They see Legitimate as a way to share their content and updates, without the abuse associated with social media. We don't allow commenting on our platform, so it keeps them safe from anonymous trolls.

How are you funded?

We have been bootstrapped to date and also received some InvestNI grants to develop the platform.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Our biggest challenge has been getting to speak to people and build relationships during the pandemic. For such a long time there were no events that we could attend and no in person meetings. We adapted, like everyone did, by using virtual meetings. These quickly became the norm and we got used to communicating this way. It is exciting now that we can meet people in person and develop these relationships.

How does Legitimate answer an unmet need?

Legitimate instantly gives readers the details on the authors of online content. We provide them with the information they need in order to judge the reliability of a piece of content.

We provide journalists with a suite of free tools that will make their job easier and enable them to grow their audience.

We're also giving a safe alternative for politicians to share their content without the stress and abuse that comes with using other platforms.

What's in store for the future?

Legitimate will hopefully be seen as a default tool for journalists and a mark of trust and authenticity. We will be gathering millions of articles each day based on hundreds of thousands of verified journalists.

Our app will be released and have several million users who use it to follow the latest news and topics from their favourite journalists, news sources and public figures; all with the reassurance that there are no fake posts or bad actors and that everything they see is traceable back to a person.

Our API will be integrated with social media platforms and instantly provide valuable information and services so that their users can avoid fake news and disinformation.

Legitimate will also be the de-facto product for all government and public figures. We will have on-boarded all politicians in the UK, Ireland and the USA. We will be the product they use for long form content, official statements, and running newsletters etc. They will now be able to distribute their content and

reach their audience without the fear of anonymous trolls and abuse.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Find a co-founder with complementary skills! We both have a completely different skill set and it serves us well. Gerard is the tech side of things and he has built the platform from scratch. Caoimhe is the relationship/communication side and has been looking after that side of the business. No founder can do everything so find someone who can do what you can't!

Caoimhe Donnelly is Head of Operations at *Legitimate*

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