

Betting on social media as a news destination for the young

March 3 2023, by David Bauder



John D'Amico, deputy executive editor for The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, left, reviews video with reporter Kimberly Avalos, Wednesday, March 1, 2023, in New York. TNM uses a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews

If young people are spending so much time on social media, it stands to reason that's a good place to reach them with news.

Operators of the News Movement are betting their business on that hunch. The company, which has been operating for more than a year, hopes to succeed despite journalism being littered with years of unsuccessful attempts to entice people in their 20s to become news consumers.

The brainchild of former Dow Jones executives, the News Movement is using a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like [TikTok](#), Instagram, [YouTube](#) and Twitter.

"You really have to stay humble and stay open to different trends and ideas," said Ramin Beheshti, president and a founder of the organization with former Dow Jones CEO Will Lewis. "We've built a newsroom that reflects the audience that we're trying to go after."

Among the newsrooms the company is producing TikTok videos for is The Associated Press. The AP has provided office space for the company and Lewis is vice chairman of its board of directors.

Some of the content would startle a news traditionalist.

Recognizing his friends appreciated calming videos, one staff member created an "explainer" on the midterm elections for Snapchat that used video of a horse being groomed, pizza being made and flowers growing while an offscreen voice discusses politics.



Slade Sohmer, standing left, editor at the news video company Recount, conducts a workshop for reporters at The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, Wednesday, March 1, 2023, in New York. TNM, which uses a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter, has bought the Recount. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews

In "[Get Ready with Me.](#)" two women prepare for work while talking about some things in the news.

There are more typical offerings: video of the earthquake in Turkey, for example, and [reports on President Biden's proposals on abortion and social media.](#) Explainer stories take a step back to tell people why something is news.

Some stories aren't really news at all, but stem from personal experience. One New York-based journalist who wondered why police didn't immediately jump onto subway tracks to save someone who fell [looked into it](#) to find they were working to stop trains.

Curious about why stories about odd things done by Florida residents are a staple of news coverage, a staff member [made a TikTok video](#) showing that it's partly because police there often release photos and details about incidents faster than other states.



Ramin Beheshti, center, president and co-founder of The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, meet with Suzi Wall, a member the company's public relations team, Thursday, March 2, 2023, in New York. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews

There's also relatable content that provides a service, of a sort: asking young people on the street some of the excuses they've used to break a date.

"News isn't always what you think it is," said Jessica Coen, U.S. executive editor, who's had leadership roles at Mashable, Morning Brew and The Cut.

The News Movement is not trying to be an aggregator, and cover every headline, Coen said. "We're trying to cover issues where we can provide context and clarity," she said.

Story formats differ to reflect where they are placed. Most TikTok videos are about a minute, while a meaty YouTube piece about women's safety and how London police react to assault cases ran for nearly 14 minutes.

Some 60% of people in Gen Z, or young adults up to their mid-20s, say they get news through social media, according to a study by Oliver Wyman and the News Movement. Other studies show people in Gen Z have a lower opinion of traditional news outlets than their elders.



Jessica Coen, left, executive editor at The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, chats with reporters at TNM offices on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, in New York. TNM uses a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews

Given this, the News Movement believes that efforts by news organizations to entice young people to their own sites or apps are tough sells.

"News shouldn't feel like work," Beheshti said. "It should be part of your daily consumption."

One person who sampled some of the News Movement's TikTok stories

offered a mixed review, saying they often seemed to emphasize flash over substance. They need to "read the room" better, said Gabriel Glynn-Habron, a 21-year-old college student from Asheville, N.C. who is studying journalism.

"I do appreciate the effort," he said. "It's part of what the news media should do more—just show the effort."

Often, those who try to appeal to young people are unsuccessful because they really don't understand who they're trying to reach, said Linda Ellerbee, whose "Nick News" programs for the Nickelodeon network in the 1990s offered a template for success. It's a mistake to think Gen Z is apathetic; the generation led the way in protesting George Floyd's death at the hands of police, she said.



Calvin Milliner, left, and Reem Farhat, reporters for The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, review video Thursday, March 2, 2023, in New York. TNM uses a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews

"Most attempts to try to deliver news to young people fail because they underestimate the intelligence of their audience," Ellerbee said. "They talk down to them. They assume that because they're young, they're dumb."

One place where Ellerbee and the News Movement agree is in how many people are frustrated by traditional news because they feel like they're getting only a piece of a story, or dipping in to a movie somewhere in the middle. That argues for more explainers.

The company's research found that while young news consumers fact-check information more readily than older peers, they're also more susceptible to believing misinformation.

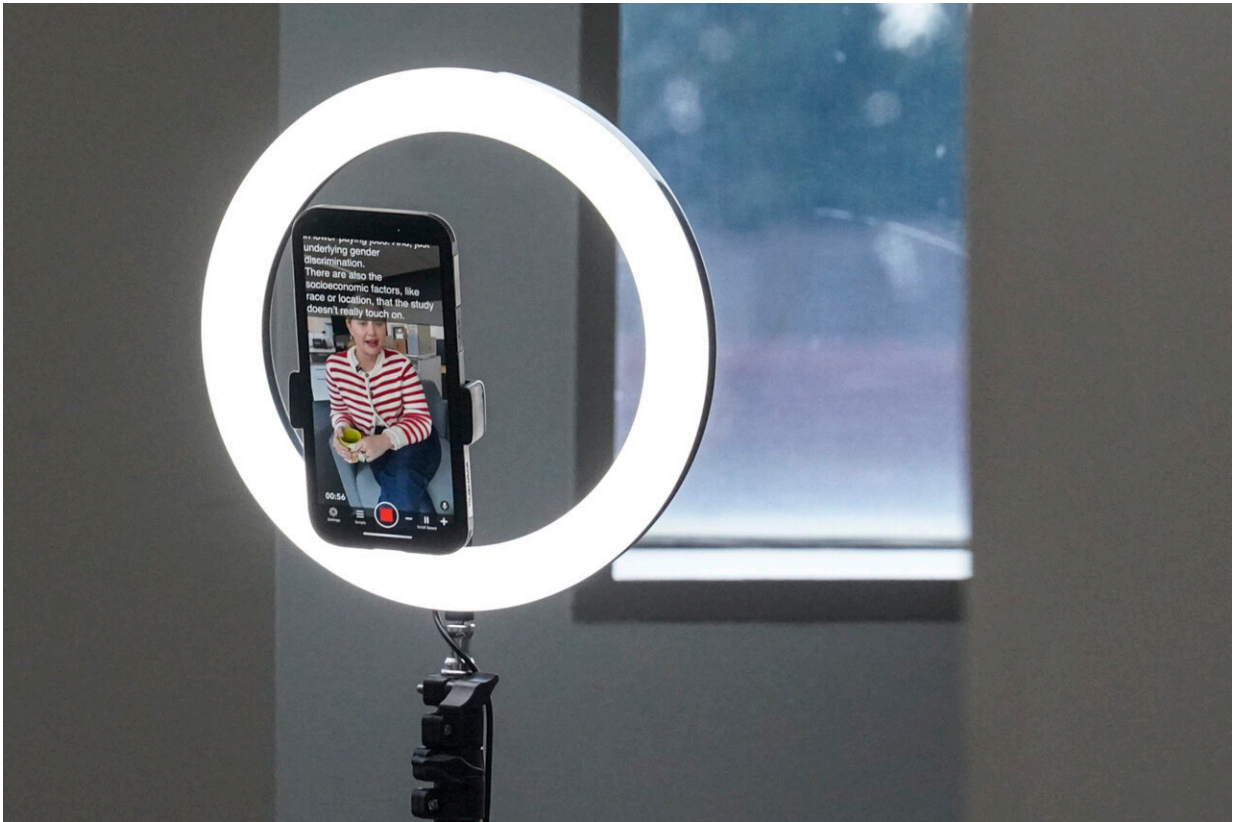
Since news is shaky as a business, the News Movement has made diversification a part of its model from the start. It will work with traditional news organizations and help them build social media teams.



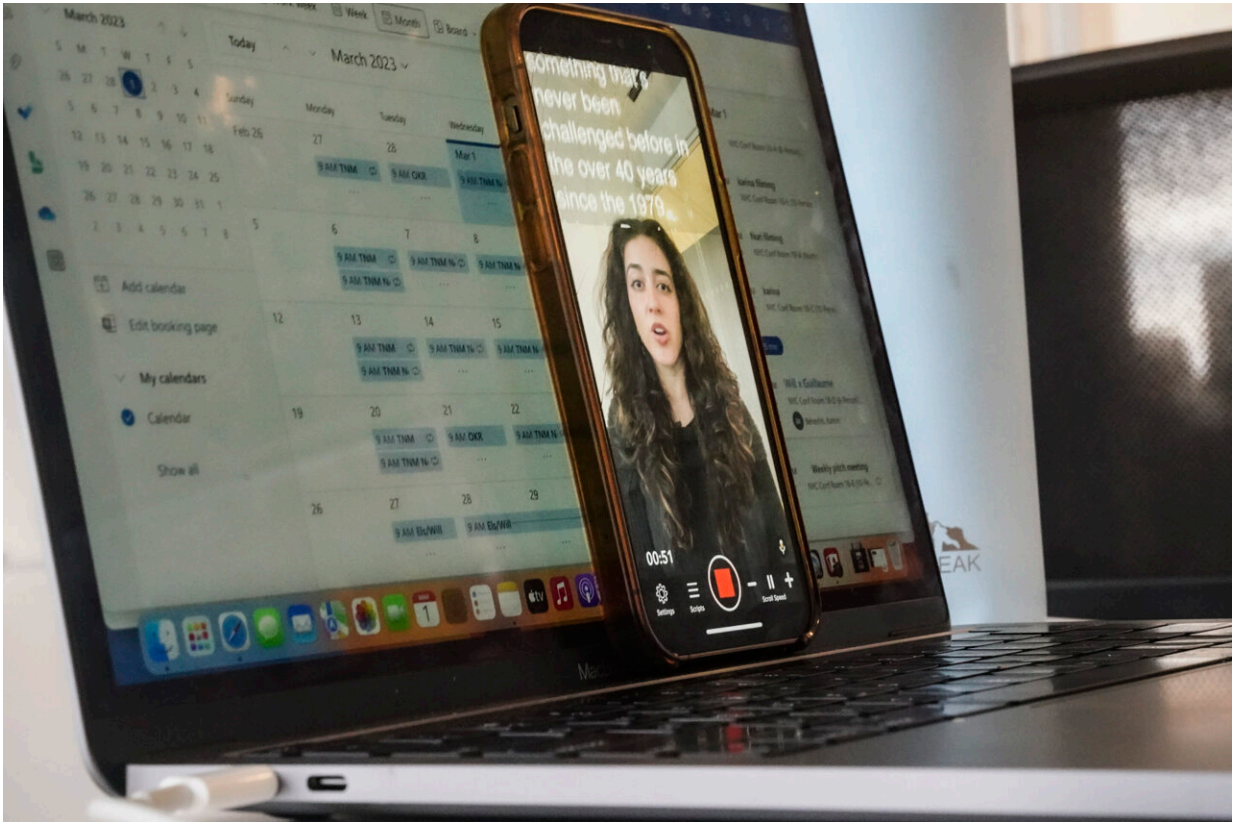
Ramin Beheshti, president and co-founder of The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, works in his office in New York on Thursday, March 2, 2023, in New York. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews



Ramin Beheshti, president and co-founder of The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, as he meets with reporters on Thursday, March 2, 2023, in New York. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews



Olivia Empson, a reporter for The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, makes a video using her phone clip to a ring light at TNM office, Thursday, March 2, 2023, in New York. TNM uses a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews



Kiki Sideris, a reporter for The News Movement (TNM), a social media news operation re-imagined for Gen-Z consumers, use her phone to produce a TikTok video on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, in New York. TNM uses a staff of reporters with an average age of 25 to make tailored news content for sites like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Credit: AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews

The News Movement advises brands on how to reach young consumers and has bought the Recount, which makes video content about American politics for social media and continues to operate as a separate unit.

"We can't have one way of making money," Beheshti said.

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