



Facebook Teams Up With Big News Organizations, Seeking to Blunt Fake News Criticism

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Key Takeaway: The Facebook News platform will give some media organizations a new revenue model and a way to grow audiences, but it also further establishes the social network as a content gatekeeper — raising questions about how objectively it will fulfill that role.

Facebook, criticised for weak controls that permitted fake news to spread across its website, has introduced a news section that will include stories from The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and other sources widely considered reputable and reliable.

The social network will pay news publishers directly for content that will be in the new section called Facebook News, CEO Mark Zuckerberg said earlier today.

The service is being tested by U.S. users and may help the company compete against Google's and Apple's news distribution services. Facebook News may also blunt attacks that the company allows too much misinformation in its feed because the section's publishers will have to meet [standards](#) that include fact-checking and community guidelines.

“We want to make sure we have a broader set of content beyond what's already posted on Facebook,” Zuckerberg said at a press conference in New York City.

Facebook News is the second move the company made this week in response to critics. On Monday, Facebook instituted policies aimed at stopping interference with the 2020 presidential election, [including](#) clearly labeling fake news and pointing out when posts are from state-controlled entities.

With Facebook News, the company will decide what content to elevate, and how to treat news about itself. It's also paying some publishers and not others, raising questions about how the company will maintain objectivity in its growing role as content

gatekeeper. Having faced criticism for an [anti-conservative bias](#) on the site, Zuckerberg explained why sites such as Breitbart will be allowed to publish in the new section.

“Part of having this be a trusted source is it needs to have a diversity of news in there,” he said. “You want to have content that represents different perspectives but is doing so in a way that complies with the standards with have for this.”

The company said in a [statement](#) that it consulted journalists and publishers before designing the product, which will present news in a variety of ways such as top stories, a personalized feed and by topic. The company also surveyed users on the kinds of content they want and plans to increase the representation of entertainment, health, business and sports content available as a result.

Publishers [included](#) in the project also include daily news like “The New York Post” as well as online-only sites like “BuzzFeed.” Facebook says it will also have local news from the country’s largest metropolitan areas.

“Having a quality stream of news and information is smart. It distinguishes quality content in ways that users may seek, but that may get lost in the fray,” Danielle Coffey, senior vice president of strategic initiatives and counsel for trade association News Media Alliance, told Karma.

She said it was notable that Facebook was choosing to compensate publishers on its own accord when it has gotten away with using that content for free. But she added that the company ultimately has the upper hand when it comes to deciding who got paid and how much.

“I think it was, ‘Take it or leave it,’ and it’s going to be difficult for anybody to say no when they are being offered money for something that was being shared for free,” Coffey said.

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While publishers may wish they could retain more control over how their content is shared, the reality is they ceded that domain to social networks years ago, noted Rich Gordon, a professor and director of digital innovation at Northwestern University’s Medill School.

“The real risk is that Facebook or any other aggregator becomes the first place people go for news and you have washed your ability to develop a loyal audience for your site and publication,” Gordon told Karma.