

From the creators of Pinterest and Twitter: a new app to fix what social media broke

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Which social media apps do you use?
2. What are some of the negative effects of social media?
3. What could we do to offset those negative effects?

2 Key words

a. Read the definitions and find the key words in the article to match them. The paragraph numbers are given in brackets to help you find the words quickly. Then read the complete article to check that you understand how the words are used in context.

1. A(n) _____ is something that counteracts or reduces the harmful effects of another thing, especially a problem or negative influence. (Paragraph 1)
2. _____ refers to severe damage, destruction or disruption, often affecting systems, communities or organisations. (Paragraph 1)
3. _____ is the activity of collecting, arranging and preserving pieces of information, images or content, often in a personalised or artistic way. (Paragraph 2)
4. _____ means to present an idea, product or proposal in a persuasive way to investors, bosses or clients. (Paragraph 3)
5. A(n) _____ is a series of messages, comments or ideas, particularly in online discussions or social media that are linked by the same topic. (Paragraph 5)
6. _____ means having a main office or central base of operations in a particular location. (Paragraph 6)
7. _____ means to significantly change or interrupt an existing system, market or way of working. (Paragraph 9)
8. _____ describes something that has been created or caused, usually as a result of effort, force or complex processes. (Paragraph 10)
9. _____ means to struggle with or try to understand and deal with a difficult issue or challenge. (Paragraph 10)
10. _____ means to take advantage of an opportunity or resource in order to gain a benefit. (Paragraph 12)

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. After the platform changed its algorithm, many small businesses had to _____ a sudden drop in new followers.
2. The startup used a viral video format to _____ marketing without increasing its advertising budget.
3. A single negative comment _____ can change the public perception of your brand.
4. A poorly handled influencer partnership which went viral for the wrong reasons caused total _____ to the company's reputation.
5. The marketing team prepared an interactive presentation to _____ the new idea to the CEO.
6. Some people use special apps that block your use of social media after a set daily time as a(n) _____ to compulsive procrastination on the phone.
7. _____ is a great way to preserve memories, especially photos, in the digital era.
8. The new clothing brand, which is _____ in Berlin, expanded rapidly due to its strong presence on social media.
9. New AI tools threaten to _____ how marketing teams reach customers.
10. Years of constant posting and optimisation have _____ a highly recognisable brand identity online.

Twitter and Pinterest founders launch app as antidote to social media

BIZ STONE AND EVAN SHARP RAISE NEW FUNDS FOR 'TANGLE' AS THEY ASSESS THE 'DEVASTATION' CAUSED BY ONLINE EXCESS

BY TIM BRADSHAW

- 1 Two Silicon Valley veterans behind Twitter and Pinterest have launched a new app that is designed to be an antidote to the "terrible devastation" they say has been caused by social media.
- 2 Biz Stone, a Twitter co-founder, and Evan Sharp, who co-founded online scrapbooking site Pinterest in 2010, have raised \$29mn in funding for their new start-up West Co, according to a regulatory filing.
- 3 West Co, which the pair founded in 2023, launched its first app, Tangle, in November. It is pitched as a "new kind of social network, designed for intentional living".
- 4 Tangle, which is at present accessible on an invite-only basis, suggests users share personal objectives or "intentions" with their friends, support each other's goals and "reflect" on how they are achieved.
- 5 "It is a tool for meaning that helps people plan with intention, capture the reality of their days, and see the deeper threads that shape their life," the company said in a recent job advertisement.
- 6 West Co, which is headquartered in San Francisco, said on its website that its mission was to "build tools to help people live life more on purpose". SparkCapital, an early Twitter investor, led West Co's seed financing round in 2024, according to another job ad.
- 7 Stone said the current version of the app — which sends users notifications every morning asking "What's your intention for today?" — was still an early test and could change before a full public launch.
- 8 "It turns out that creating something to help people navigate their lifetime is difficult work," he told the Financial Times, "but I think it's worth it."
- 9 In a recent podcast interview, Sharp — who is West Co's chief executive — described his "eight-year-long obsession" with "really trying to understand what we fundamentally disrupted with the phone and social media so that I could . . . help make that a little bit better".
- 10 "What could I build that might help address just some of the terrible devastation of the human mind and heart that we've wrought the last 15 years?" he said.

Stone and Sharp are among several Silicon Valley executives grappling with the side effects of the products and services that they built, even as their companies' success made them wealthy.
- 11 Sir Jonathan Ive, the former Apple designer who helped birth the iPhone, has described his project to develop an AI-based consumer device with OpenAI as a response to the "unintended consequences" of the smartphone. Sharp spent two years working at LoveFrom, Ive's design firm, before launching West Co.
- 12 Tangle is Stone's latest attempt to capitalise on his earlier success. He is also a co-founder of Medium, an online publishing platform, and Jelly, a question-and-answer app that was later acquired by Pinterest. He launched investment firm Future Positive in 2019 and at present serves on the board of Mastodon, another social networking group.
- 13 After leaving Twitter in 2021, Stone clashed with Elon Musk after the Tesla and SpaceX chief acquired the company, which the billionaire has now renamed X. Musk is "not a serious person", Stone said in a post in December 2022, describing the changes Musk made to the service as "heartbreaking".

Continued on next page

14 Several of West Co's founding team previously worked at Twitter and Pinterest. Another early employee, Reverend Sue Phillips, a former Unitarian Universalist church minister turned tech company adviser, now serves as the start-up's "head of wise AI and ancient technologist", according to her LinkedIn profile.

FT

Tim Bradshaw, 4 January, 2026.

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3 Understanding the article

a. Are these sentences True or False according to the information in the article? Tick (✓) the true sentences and rewrite the false ones.

1. The founders of the new app think that social media is harmful. ☐
2. Stone and Sharp are funding their new project themselves. ☐
3. Anyone can create an account and join the new app. ☐
4. Tangle lets you interact with your friends who also have an account. ☐
5. The purpose of the app is to promote mindfulness in everyday life. ☐
6. The app has no notifications. ☐
7. Creating the app was challenging work. ☐
8. Sharp wants to help fix some of the problems that his own earlier apps created. ☐
9. Stone used to work at Twitter. ☐
10. Many of Stone's coworkers previously worked on other social media apps. ☐

4 Business language – startups

a. Complete the definitions with the phrases in the box.

pitch (an idea)	funding	co-founder	launch	start-up
raise	industry group	mission	co-found	

1. A(n) _____ is a newly created company, often focused on innovation, technology or rapid growth.
2. To _____ means to officially introduce a new product, service or company to the market.
3. A(n) _____ is a clearly defined purpose or long-term goal that guides a company's decisions and values, often published on the company website.
4. A(n) _____ is one of two or more people who establish a company or organisation.

5. To _____ means to obtain financial support from investors to develop or grow a business.
6. To _____ means to formally present a concept or proposal in order to gain interest, approval, or investment.
7. A(n) _____ is an organised association of companies or professionals operating within the same sector.
8. To _____ refers to starting a company together based on a shared purpose or vision, not just financial goals.

b. Complete the short text with words from task a.

YouTube began in February 2005 as a(n) (1) _____, responding to the growing demand for easy online video sharing. In the early stage, the founders defined a clear (2) _____ of focusing on reducing technical barriers for users uploading and watching videos. The first video uploaded in April by Jawed Karim, one of the (3) _____, was the symbolic starting point of user-generated video culture online.

The public (4) _____ in December 2005 marked YouTube's transition from an experiment to a company.

To scale the platform, the team needed to (5) _____, which required them to (6) _____ effectively to investors unfamiliar with user-generated video platforms. As visibility increased, YouTube quickly became recognised as a core part of its (7) _____.

c. Use the vocabulary in task a to write a similar text about another app startup.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. In your opinion, would this kind of app undo the damage that social media have caused?
Why / Why not?
2. Who should be made responsible for the negative social effects of new technologies?
3. Why is it often so difficult to foresee the social issues that a new technology may cause?

6 Wider business theme – app startup

- a. You and your partner are going to prepare a pitch for a new app to solve the issue mentioned in the article.

Think of the following:

- What problems your app will solve
- Who the target users are (e.g. what age group: young people, middle-aged people, what demographics, gender, income brackets, etc.)
- How your app will make money
- What the core features of the app will be
- What feature is the USP (Unique Selling Point) that will attract customers

- a. Pitch your idea of the app to your classmates.

Useful language

Our app was developed in response to a growing problem with ...

We identified a clear gap in the market for ...

The idea for this app emerged from the first-hand experience of ...

Our startup is designed to address the challenge of ...

Our primary audience is ...

The main feature of the app will be ...