

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

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What social media apps do you use?
2. Do you think you spend too much time on social media apps?
3. What could you do to spend less time on your phone?

2 Key words

a. Match the words with their definitions. Then look at how the words are used in the article to check your understanding of them. The paragraph numbers are in brackets to help you find them quickly. Read the complete article to see how the words are used in context.

thread (5)	disrupt (9)	navigate (8)	technologist (14)
capitalise on (12)	grapple with (10)	pitch (3)	
devastation (1)	headquartered (6)	wrought (10)	
launch (1)	antidote (1)	scrapbooking (2)	

1. _____: is a person who works with or on technology
2. _____: means to officially introduce a new product or service to the public
3. _____: means to try to deal with a difficult situation or problem
4. _____: is something that reduces or stops a negative effect
5. _____: means to manage or go through a difficult situation successfully
6. _____: is a series of connected messages or comments online
7. _____: means to completely change how something works, often in business or technology
8. _____: refers to very serious damage or destruction
9. _____: means to present an idea or product to get support or investment
10. _____: means to take advantage of an opportunity
11. _____: describes something that has been caused, often by a negative event

12. _____: means having a company's main office in a particular place
13. _____: is the activity of preserving, presenting and arranging important photos and artwork, usually in a notebook

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

1. The startup had to _____ negative comments after an insensitive online ad.
2. Apps that limit screen time can be a(n) _____ to spending too many hours on social media.
3. A horrible viral scandal caused total _____ to the brand's reputation.
4. The company is _____ in Berlin but sells its products globally.
5. The founder prepared a short video to _____ the app to potential investors.
6. A popular comment _____ helped the post reach thousands of users.
7. New AI tools may _____ how companies traditionally reach their customers.
8. These brands _____ a trending topic to promote their product via online videos.
9. Poor communication _____ confusion among customers online.
10. The marketing team uses digital _____ to save ideas for future campaigns.
11. The sales team wanted to _____ a new feature in the app by the end of the quarter.
12. As a skilled _____, she focused on improving the app's technical performance.
13. The company learned how to _____ sudden changes in social media algorithms.

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.

© The Financial Times.

All rights reserved.

Articles republished from the *Financial Times*.

3 Understanding the article

a. Are these sentences True or False according to the information in the article? Tick (✓) the correct 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 make the user more focused. ☐
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 products created. ☐
9. Stone used to work at Twitter. ☐
10. Many of Stone's coworkers previously worked on other social media apps. ☐

4 Business language – doer nouns in Business English

a. Complete the table with the correct words. You can find the words in the article.

Verb	Object noun	Doer noun
found	foundation	_____
—	technology	_____
_____	development	developer
design	design	_____
invest	investment	_____
execute	execution	_____
_____	capitalism / capital	capitalist

b. Complete the sentences with the words from the table in task a.

1. The _____ of the app wanted to create a platform that helps people spend less time on social media.
2. A highly qualified _____ wrote the source code for the app.
3. Good _____ is important, so users can easily start using the app.
4. The _____ of the company was built on clear values and long-term goals.
5. The _____ of the app continued after the first trials with active users.
6. Without careful _____, even a good business idea can fail.
7. An anonymous _____ provided money to launch a huge marketing campaign and increase sales.
8. A venture _____ supported the company because they believed in its future success.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Would you use this app? Why? Why not?
2. How do you think this app can make money?
3. Can you see any potential problems with this app? What could they be?

6 Wider business theme – app startup

a. You and your partner are going to prepare a pitch for a new app to solve the issues 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

b. 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 ...