

CURRENC PROBLEM

You are General Counsel and Senior Vice President of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs at CurrenC, a citizen-journalism website. Users post raw video of breaking events, along with video news reports that they have created themselves. The site then offers extensive tools for other users to annotate, excerpt, and embed each others' videos in creating customized news feeds. It currently has over half a million monthly active users in 121 countries, and over twenty million unique daily visitors. They are uploading nearly 20,000 hours of video a day.

You also have a problem: the site's popularity has made it a magnet for all kinds of chaos and abuse. Some users are uploading and edit pornographic movies. Others are posting content that is illegal in one or more countries, such as anti-Semitic videos (illegal in many European countries) and videos of demonstrations in Arab countries (often banned by the local regimes). There are conspiracy videos accusing Black Lives Matter activists of secretly plotting to overthrow the United States government, gory videos of people losing fingers in industrial accidents, and emotionally harrowing videos of a fleeing suspect being shot by a police officer and then bleeding to death on the sidewalk while bystanders scream. And then there is the fake news: videos that purport to depict events that simply haven't happened, or that seriously mischaracterize events that have. One notorious video (six million views) features footage of tour buses on their way to an amusement park and claims that they are full of people being driven across state lines to commit voter fraud. Another (four million views) has forged audio of a senator supposedly telling a female constituent to "Sit down before I smack you down."

Users, the media, and even politicians ("Another fake news lie from the failing liberal CurrentC!") are angry about the site's quality problem. They have taken to posting negative comments beneath the videos they dislike, using the site's "report this video for a violation of our policies" button, complaining to local authorities, and occasionally trying to launch denial-of-service attacks on the CurrenC website. But they don't always agree on which videos are the problem. A group of conservative users associated with the Eastlake Baptist Church (EBC), for example, regularly flags coming-out documentaries as "sexually explicit," while a gay-rights activist group has been trying to have the EBC's Sunday sermons (which frequently include lines like "for the sodomites shall burn eternal in the fires of hell; let the righteous purge them from their midst") taken down as "hate speech."

The CEO has asked you to propose a reboot of CurrenC's Acceptable Use Policy. She wants new, clear, and principled guidelines for when CurrenC will take down a video or block an account. She has indicated that she will authorize you to engage in significant hiring for a new Content Moderation team if you can present a convincing strategy for how CurrenC will monitor the content of users' uploads and respond to complaints.

Design a new strategy to improve CurrenC's user satisfaction, public image, and positive impact on the world without exposing it to excessive business or legal risks.