



Counter-Disinformation Training



Red, Wine, and Blue

October 2025

Agenda

1. What does disinformation look like?
2. The business model of social media
3. How to spot disinformation
4. What we can do

The background of the slide is a dark, blue-tinted photograph of a crowd of people. Many of their hands are raised in the air, suggesting a moment of collective action, protest, or celebration. The image is out of focus, with the hands in the foreground being more distinct than those further back.

What does disinformation look like?

In 2025, disinformation is more top-down than bottom-up

Right-wing media say Portland is a war zone under siege. On-the-ground coverage paints a different picture.

Misinformation targets judge who ruled against Trump in deportation case

Trump says DOGE found 'tens of billions' in savings. Not even close.

Top vaccine official resigns from FDA, criticizes RFK Jr. for promoting 'misinformation and lies'

Trump Confuses 'Transgender' Mice With 'Transgenic' Mice, Used To Study Cancer, In Attack On Biden Administration Science Funding

What is disinformation?

Misinformation

Information that is **believed to be true** by those sharing it, and is shared **without intention to cause harm**

Disinformation

Information that is **false** and is **shared with the goal** of causing harm

Malinformation

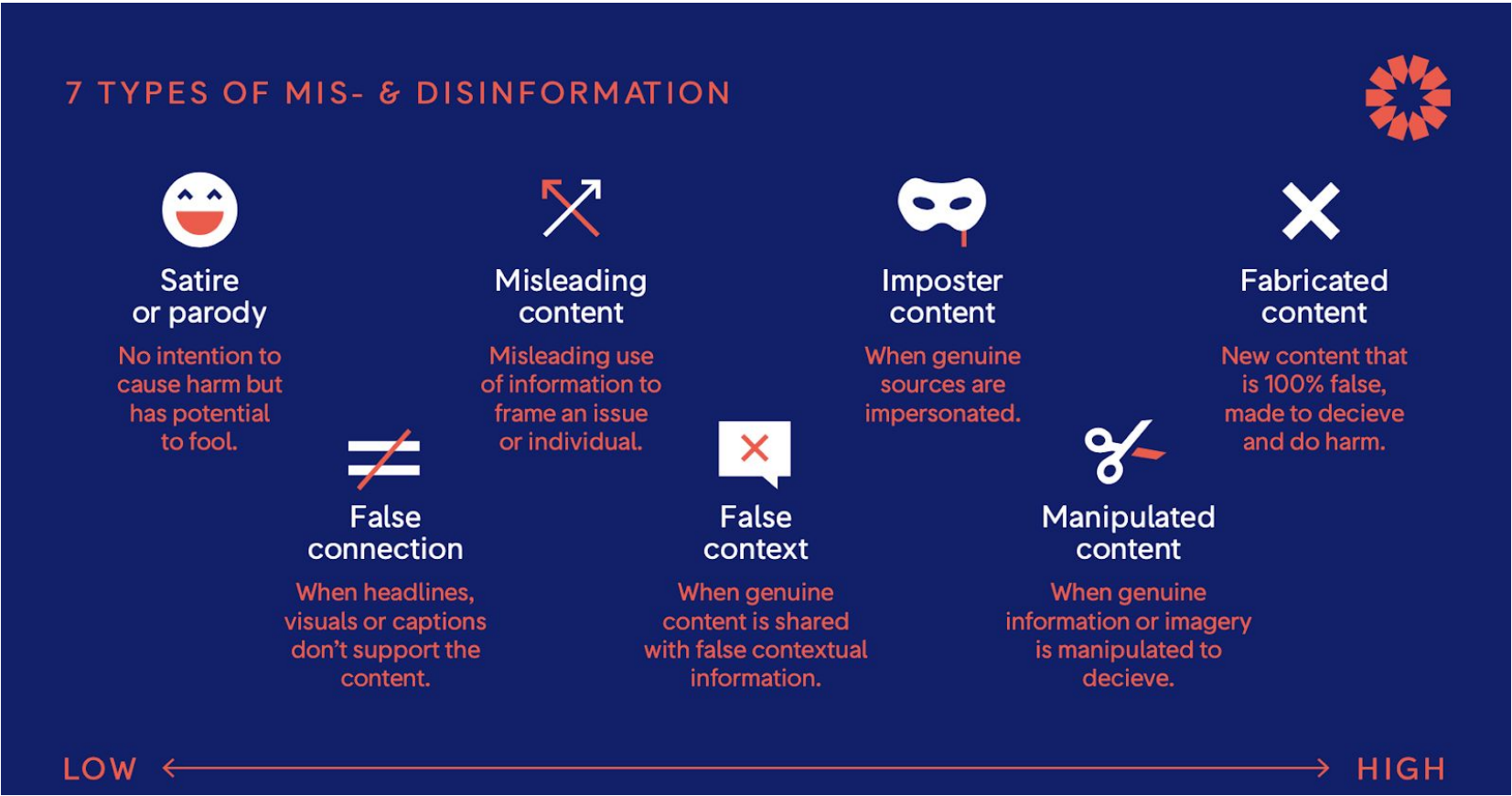
Information that is **based on reality** but is **used to harm or threaten** a person, an organization, or a country

Propaganda

True or false information spread to **convince** an audience of beliefs (often political). May include information that is technically true, but selectively presented or distorted.

Bad actors often integrate **SOME** truth into their content

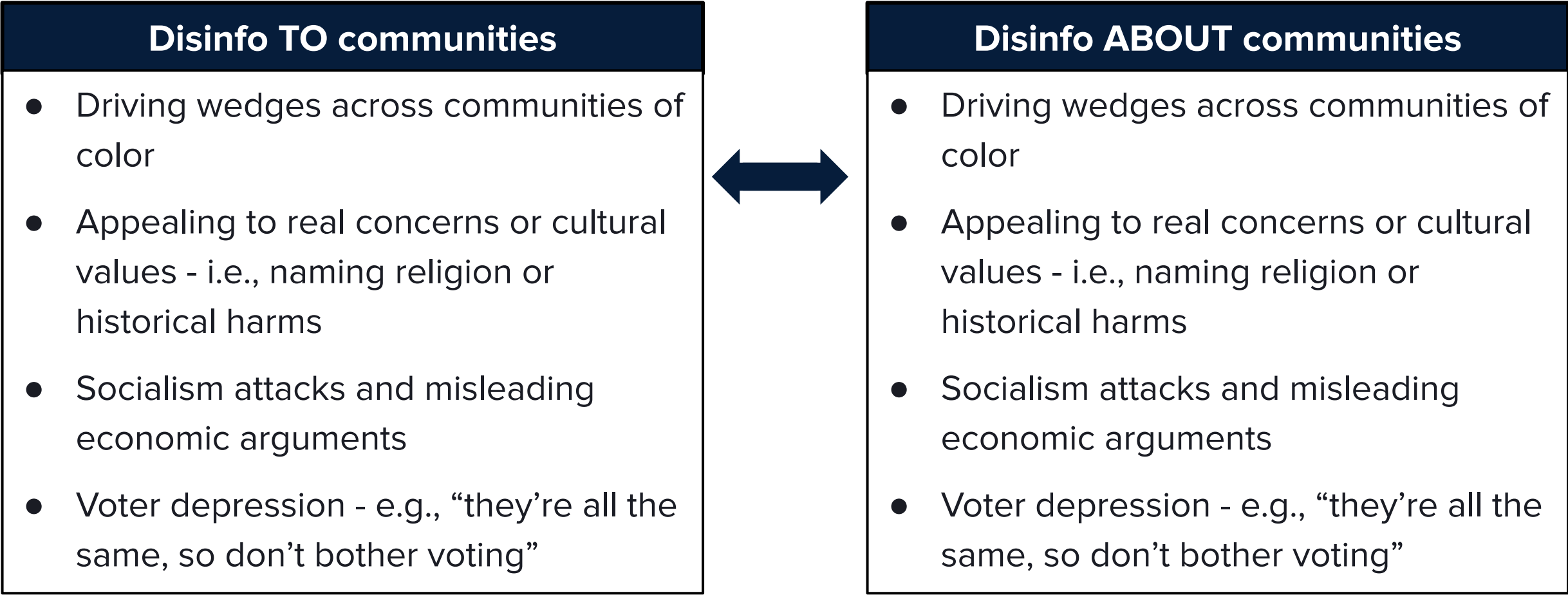
We can think of disinformation as falling on a spectrum of “falseness.” Note that “more false” does not equate to “more harm” - the opposite is often true.



Bad actors deploy various tactics to make their messages louder

- 1 Artificial manipulation
- 2 “Gaming” algorithms
- 3 In-network engagement
- 4 Effective communications strategies
- 5 Focusing on lifestyle, culture

Some communities are threatened more than others



Note that some in-community bad actors serve primarily as a “permission structure” for outside groups than a true in-community messenger

Tech companies are doing less and less to moderate content



- Stopped prioritizing health, voting disinfo
- Replacing fact-checking with flawed “Community Notes”
- Dropped J6 restrictions on accounts, reinstated Trump
- Added Dana White to its Board



- Dropped content moderation policies, Trust & Safety team
- Limits punishments for severe violations
- Actively boosts Musk’s own posts
- Musk actively shaping Trump political agenda



- Laying off content moderation, trust & safety teams in shift to AI moderation
- Powerful algorithm actively promotes false, hateful content



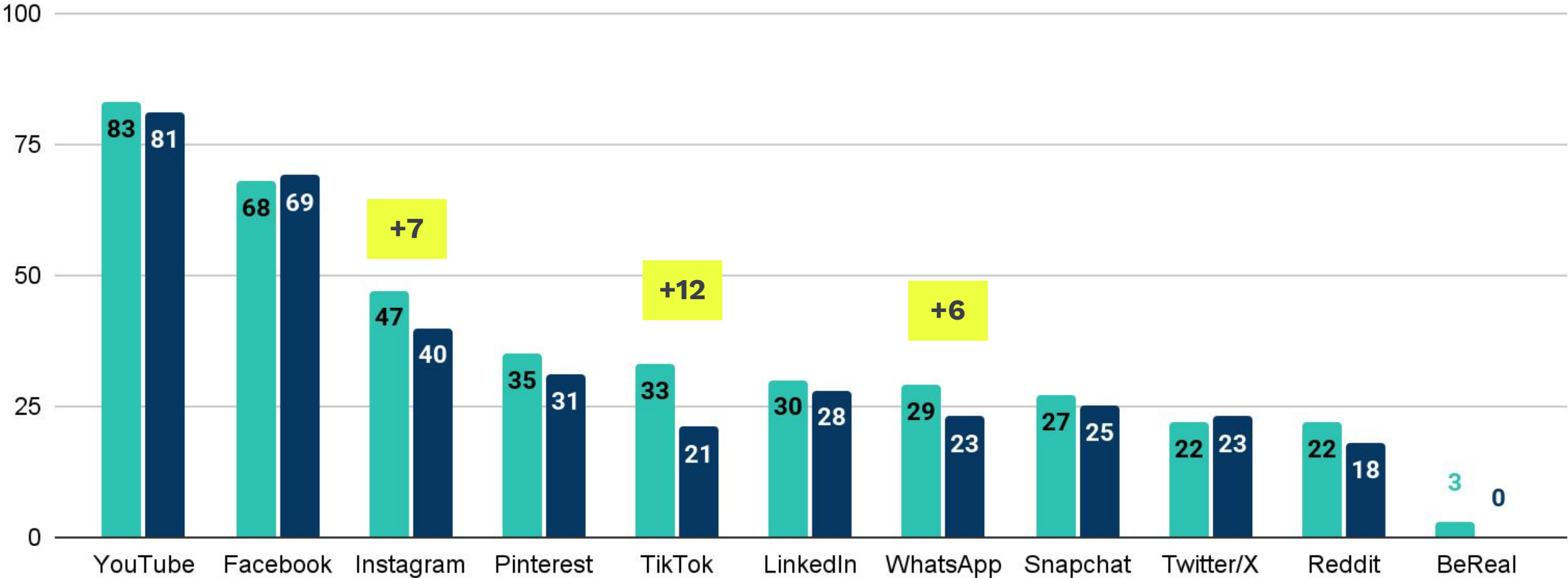
- Laying off content moderation, trust & safety teams
- Piloting a “Community Notes” program
- Reinstated Trump after J6 ban

The business model of social media

What social media platforms do Americans use?

% of US adults who say they ever use...

2023 2021



What is an algorithm?

algorithm

[al-guh-rith-uhm]

noun.

a mathematical set of rules and instructions that systematically sorts, filters, and recommends platform content for users based on how likely they are to like and interact with it.

Algorithms predict what will hold our attention

While most social media platforms have the same objective—to keep users on their platform for as long as possible—they each have their own unique formula to do so.



Some key factors in Facebook's News Feed:

- **Relationships**
- **Engagement**
- **Recency**



Some key factors in TikTok's For You Page:

- **Topic/issue area**
- **Views and engagement**
- **Not as interested in recency**

Social media operates in the “attention economy”

Companies don't charge directly for their product. In many ways, WE are the product.



Our views, clicks, and engagement – our ATTENTION – holds tremendous value

Attention is a finite (and increasingly strained) resource



Social media platforms collect data about what we pay attention to

They track and profile users to keep us on as long as possible, with little transparency

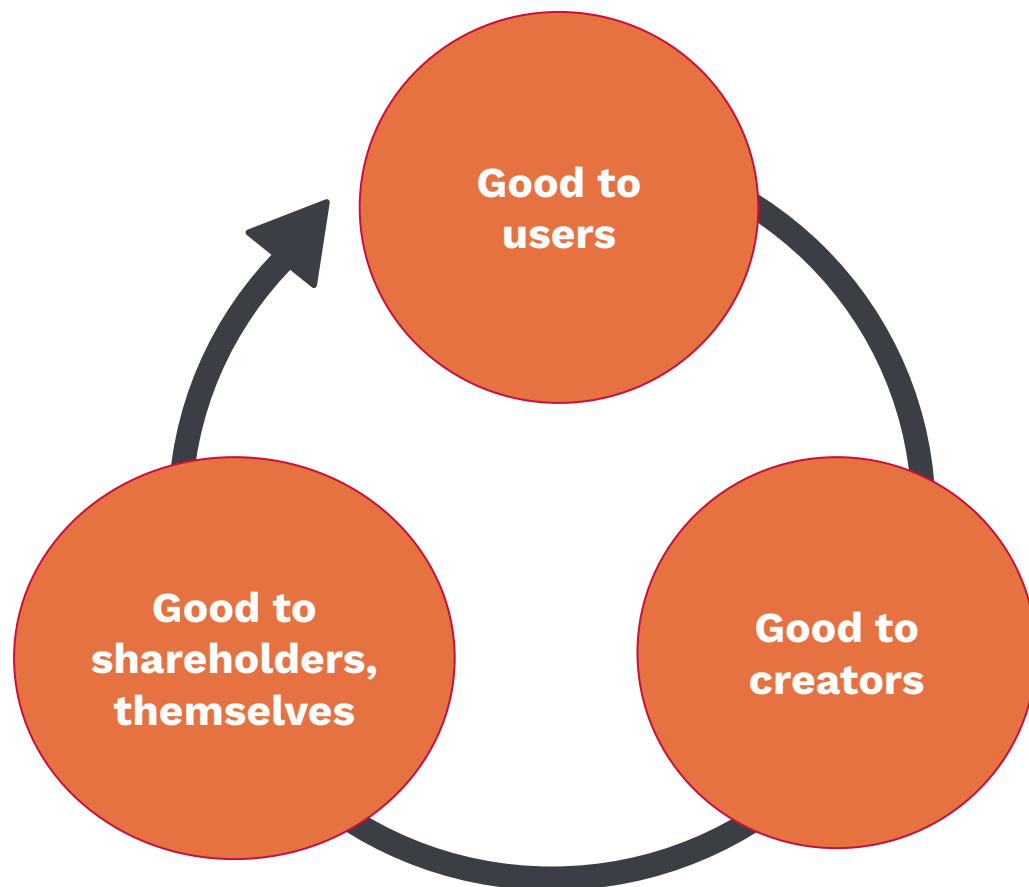


They use this data to sell our “attention” to advertisers

Algorithms give more power to social media companies to understand and shape our attention

They use this to target ads at us based on our behavior, relationships, and identity

Profit-seeking eventually harms users AND creators



Platforms inevitably become toxic over time

Cory Doctorow calls this the *enshittification cycle*.

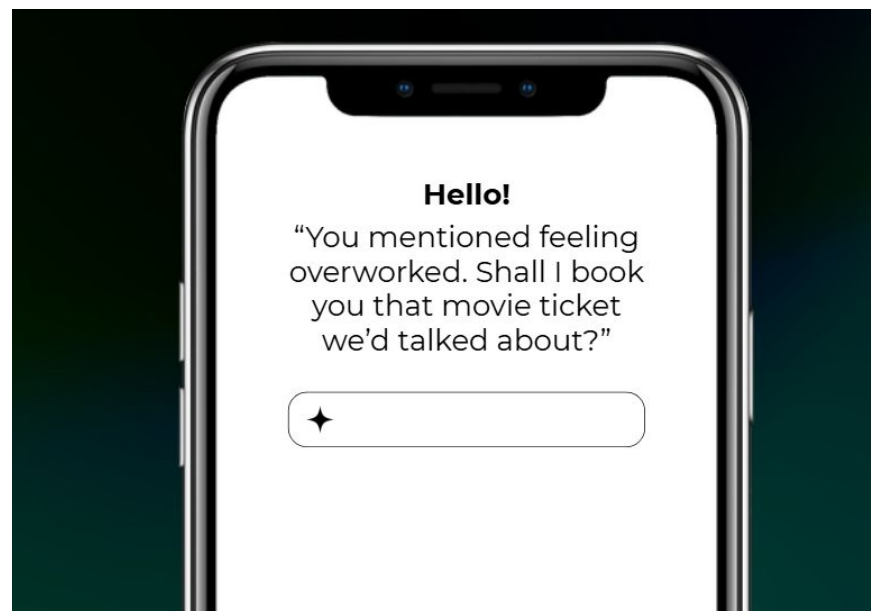
This is seen as an inevitable process - one that has played out with Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, and now TikTok.

Doctorow says it's too easy for platforms to change how they allocate value. Platforms hold a powerful role between "buyers" and "sellers," where they can play them off each other.

What comes next?

Some see a shift from the “attention economy” to the “intention economy”

- **In the future, AI tools may be able to subtly influence our intentions and behavior.**
- **Relies on AI tools building up vast quantities of data about how humans think and behave. By understanding our online habits and psychology, these tools can build increasing levels of trust and understanding.**
- **In the future, AI tools will try to “sell your decisions before you take them.”**

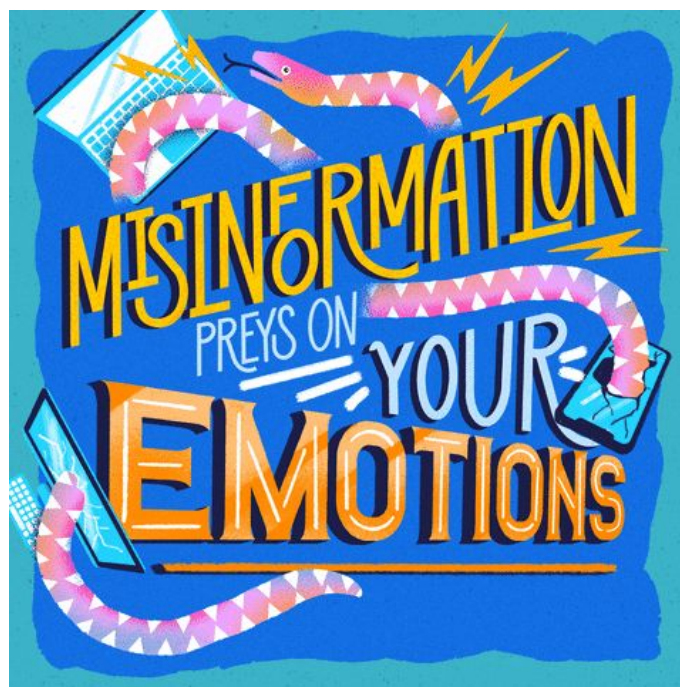


How to spot disinformation

Any time you have an emotional response, pause

Problematic content is often geared to tap into negative emotions like fear, anxiety, despair, anger.

Any time you see something that makes you feel that way, it's worth pausing to assess that claim further.



Tips for evaluating information

You can ask yourself a series of questions as you assess new claims.



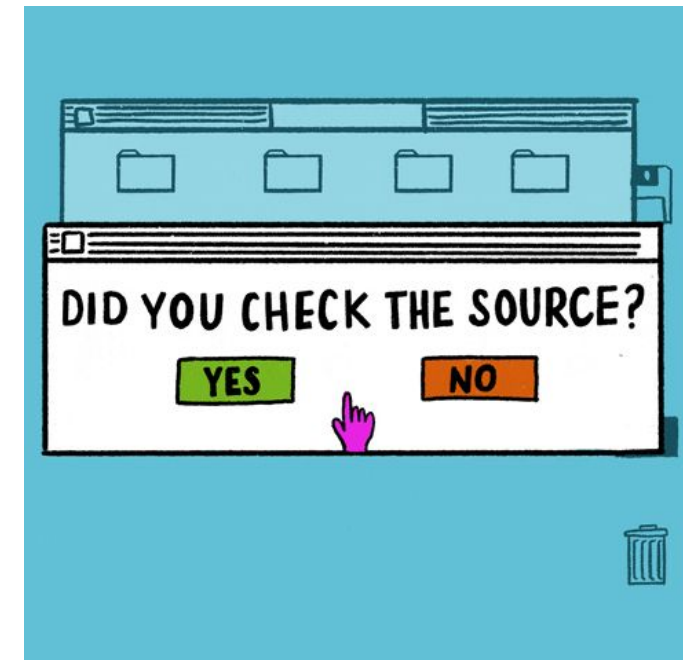
Helpful resources

Fact-checking resources:

- Politifact
- Factcheck.org
- AP Fact Check
- Reuters Fact Check

Source-checking resources:

- Media Bias Fact Check
- Newsguard
- AllSides
- Ground News



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What we can do

Do not amplify harmful content online - move to a private space

- Interactions are content's fuel.
- No difference for positive vs. negative engagement.
- Avoid: likes, comments, shares on content you don't want to spread - even to debunk.
- Instead: Reward the content you DO want to spread.



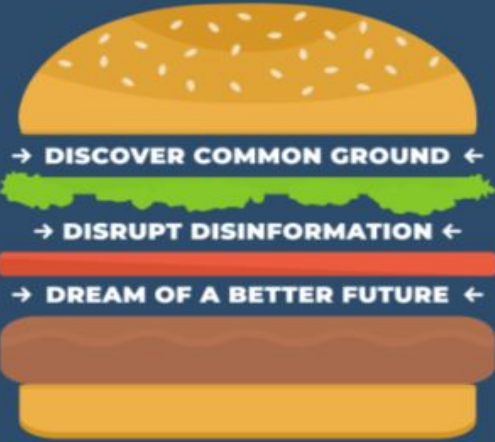
Consider a “truth sandwich” for inoculation messaging

Our brains remember what we hear first and most often!

- 1.**Positive:** Address the core fear/concern with common ground.
- 2.**Negative:** Offer a “logic correction”
- 3.**Positive:** Pivot to your proactive message

Cast Doubt on Doubt!

Our democracy is strongest when we trust in our systems and vote. When pundits sow mistrust, ask why! Who benefits from questioning election outcomes? The winners, or the losers? **When truth tellers vote, democracy wins. #TruthBrigade**



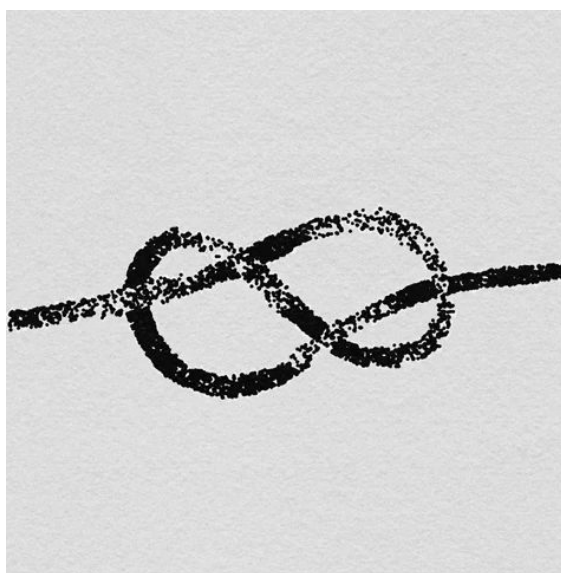
Wait for It!

We hope for quick election results, but democracy is worth the wait. Officials may need more time this year to ensure every vote is counted fairly - isn't that a good thing? **This election, plan to vote and be patient. Democracy is strongest when every voice is heard. #TruthBrigade**



Consider how to integrate trust-building into your work

Trust is the ultimate form of inoculation against disinformation



Trust can be reinforced with...

- Feeling listened to
- Emotional connections
- Relatable content
- Critical thinking
- Repetition
- Authenticity

Tips for having hard discussions

1. **Be civil**
2. **Find common ground**
3. **Offer both facts and “logic corrections”**
4. **Respond to what they mean more than what they say**
5. **Pick your battles, then be patient**



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