

Reduce, Remove,

See why

Making the case for better misinformation labels

**LEAD**  **STORIES**

# Fact checking has an image problem...



Opinion **Fake news**

## How 'fact-checking' can be used as censorship


REPORT | AUGUST 19, 2020

## Most Americans Think Social Media Sites Censor Political Viewpoints

sky news

THE  
FACT CHECK  
FILES



  
**Have you been censored?**  
Write to us and let us know!

[Submit a Report](#)

...good thing we fixed that!

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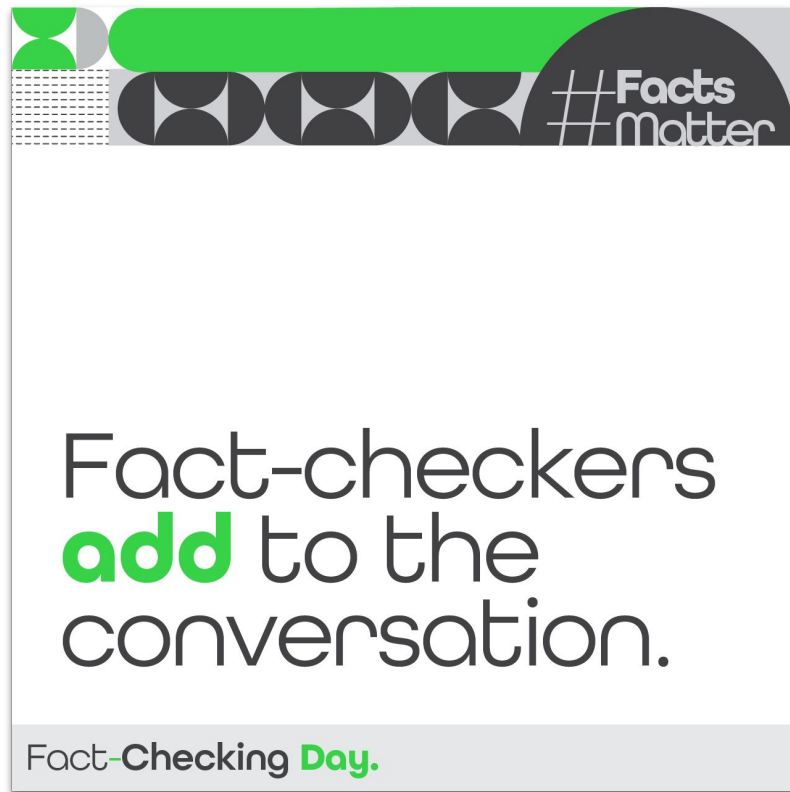
The image shows the top portion of a Poynter website article. At the top left is a hamburger menu icon. The word "Poynter." is centered in a green serif font. To the right is an envelope icon with a red notification dot. Below the header are three dark grey buttons with white text: "Commentary", "Fact-Checking", and "IFCN". The main title "Opinion | Let's say it plainly: Fact-checking is not censorship" is in a bold, black sans-serif font. Below the title is a sub-headline "Fact-checking adds to the public debate; it doesn't suppress it" in a smaller, black sans-serif font. At the bottom is a partial view of a smartphone screen showing a finger touching an icon with a red notification bubble containing the number "9".

☰ Poynter. ✉

Commentary Fact-Checking IFCN

**Opinion | Let's say it plainly:  
Fact-checking is not censorship**

Fact-checking adds to the public debate; it doesn't suppress it



The image is a graphic for Fact-Checking Day. At the top is a decorative header with a green bar on the left, a grey bar with a white grid pattern, and a dark grey semi-circle on the right containing the text "#Facts Matter" in white. Below the header, the main text "Fact-checkers add to the conversation." is displayed in a large, black sans-serif font, with the word "add" in green. At the bottom, a grey bar contains the text "Fact-Checking Day." in a smaller, black sans-serif font, with "Day." in green.

#Facts Matter

Fact-checkers  
**add** to the  
conversation.

Fact-Checking **Day.**

# Not really...

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...and unfortunately the current misinformation labels on Meta aren't helping to improve the reputation of fact-checking.

# Remove, Reduce, Inform = a great idea!

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 Meta

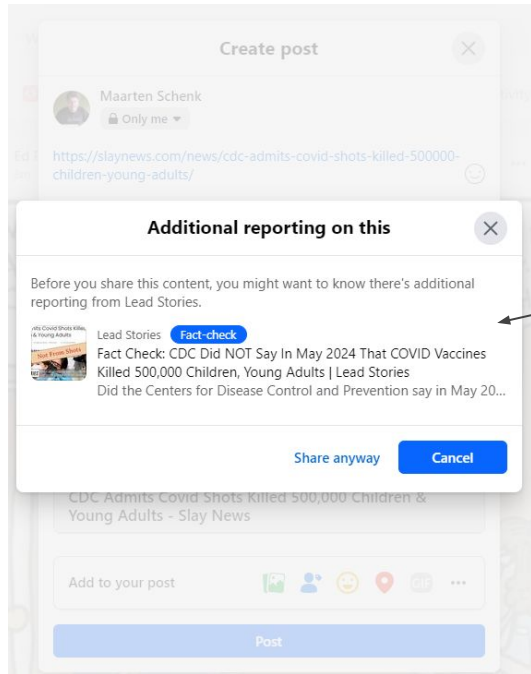
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## Remove, Reduce, Inform: New Steps to Manage Problematic Content

April 10, 2019

Guy Rosen, VP of Integrity, and Tessa Lyons, Head of News  
Feed Integrity

# Adding friction to slow misinformation going viral = good!

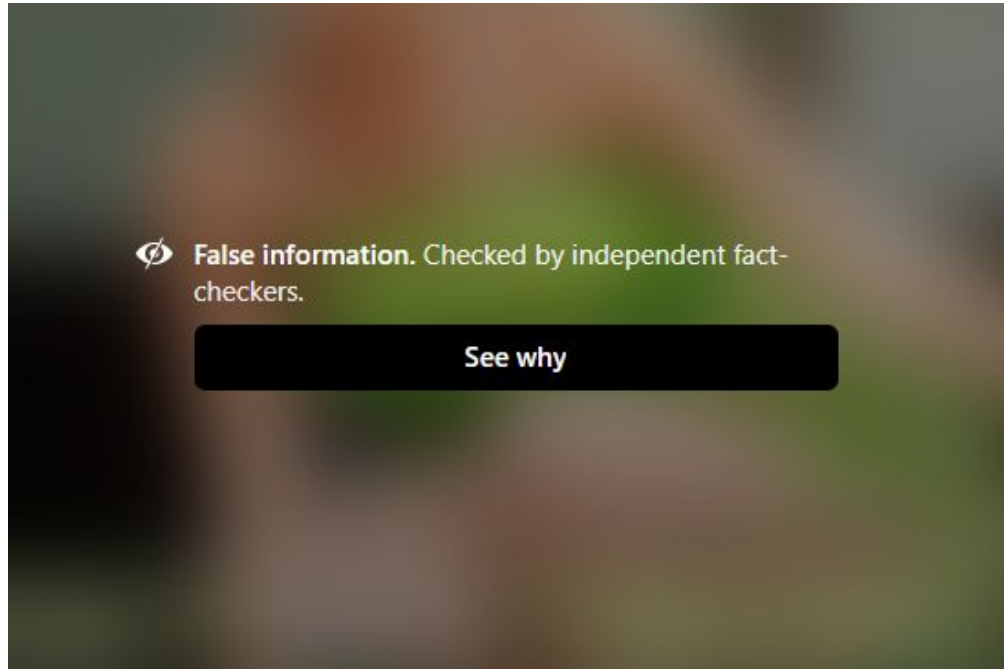


A popup with good information and at least one extra click to perform

- > slows down misinfo
- > still feels helpful
- > not accusatory

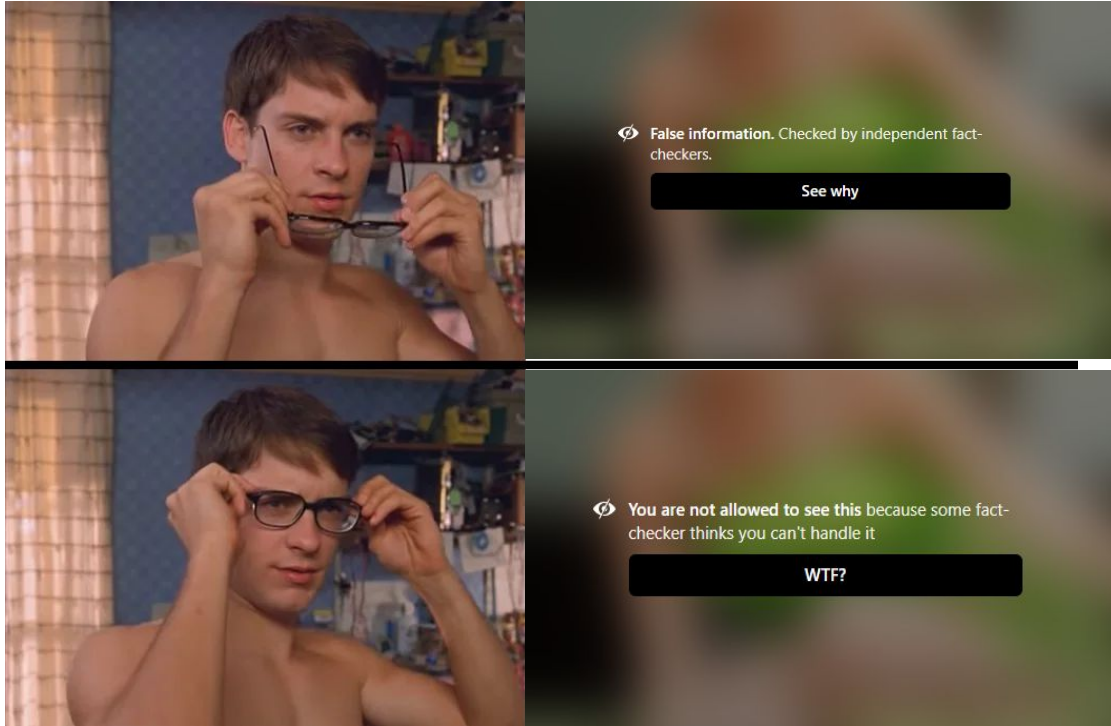
# Adding friction to see a post = feels hostile

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# To some users, “Inform” feels like “Remove” or “Reduce”

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# And some of them \*really\* don't like it...

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Stop your lies about things Inbox x

 @gmail.com>  
to tips ▾

Dear sir or madam

We free speech and stop from using because you are getting paid to stop bringing the truth out

You NEED TO STOP IT YOU SHIT HEADS


 @gmail.com> Wed, Feb 28, 1:49 AM

to tips ▾

Hi,

You can tell when an election is coming soon because now your fact checking literally everything. Get a real fucking job you pieces of shit. You have no brain and cannot think for yourself. Paidoff by the left wings for your own benefit. Please leave this country and stay out of our elections. I will report everything you post on and do since it's all fake lies you spread. I hope you get constant emails from people around the world to waste your time, since you have so much to waste. Worthless.



Fake checkers External Inbox x

@yahoo... Sun, Apr 21, 6:55 PM

to hatemail@leadstories.com ▾

I know that was a quote that you all have deemed not accurate. I was not


LIARS External Inbox x

 @gmail.com> Mon, May 27, 5:11PM

to hatemail ▾

Every single thing you vile demons have fact checked the last 5 years have been false. Are you the stupidest people on the face of the earth? Or are you just evil filth that loves to subjugate the world to your wills? I cannot wait until the big shift happens, and you are all dragged out into the light for public to see. The evils you have perpetuated will not go unnoticed, here, or, by God most high, who will eviscerate you into the light field for being such evil filth You should all be put in jail for the lies you spread you vile scum of the Earth lying sacks of shit

your website External Inbox x

@yahoo.com> Tue, Mar 5, 9:02PM

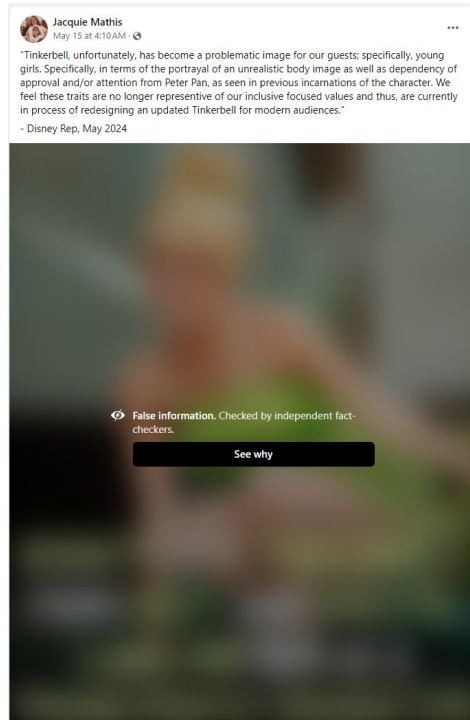
to hatemail@leadstories.com ▾

I've never seen so much misinformation and lies in one place than on your website. Seriously - is everyone working there mentally retarded? Do you even really look into things or do you just make these lies and misinformation up by retard-committee? I mean you are so stupid - you refer to Q and the anons as QAnon - which shows you don't know a DAMN THING about Q! You should hire at least one person with an IQ higher than 65. Then maybe you wouldn't look like a bunch of morons!

I suggest you go to the tallest building you can find, go to the roof and consider your miserable communistic lives! You are a waste of air and resources. Go fuck yourselves!!!

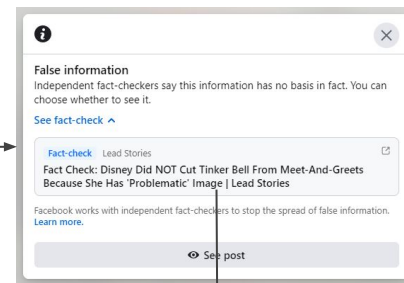
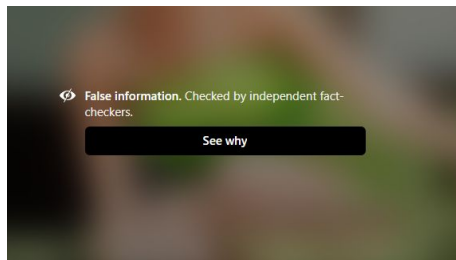
# (Note: it is not even applied consistently...)

*(Yes, the “Entire post” is flagged)*

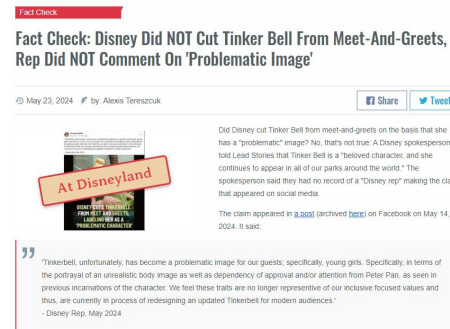


Information that is **also false** and dealt with in the fact check, yet it appears **without cover or obvious label**.

# Adding friction to see the true information = WTF?



- It takes **two clicks** to get to the false information.
- It takes **three clicks** to get to the true information!
- You can get to the false information **without ever seeing** the true information!



This is what the post looked like on Facebook at the time of writing.

“Missing context” just irritates the people who don’t want to click on the message, it doesn’t inform them.

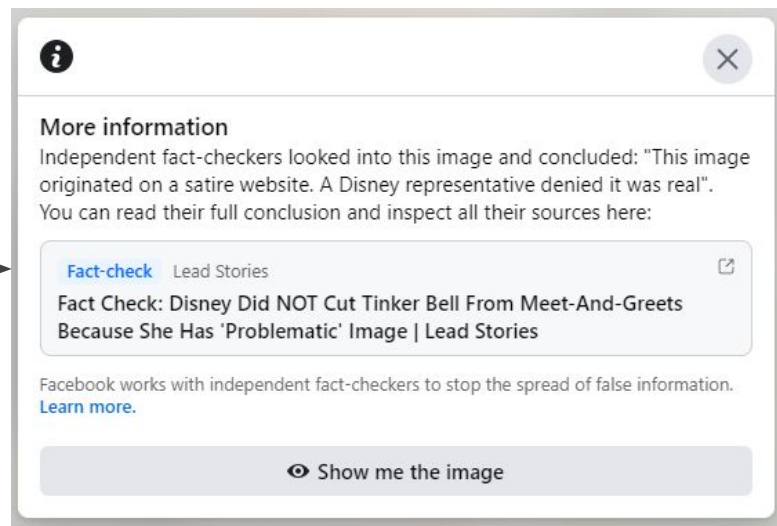
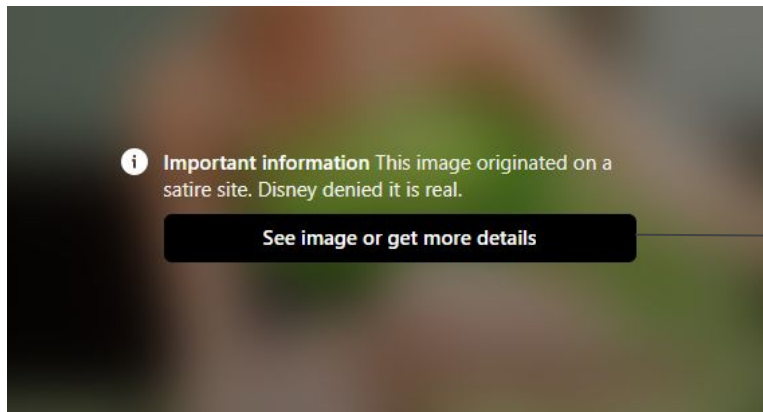
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Missing context. Independent fact-checkers say information in this post could mislead people.



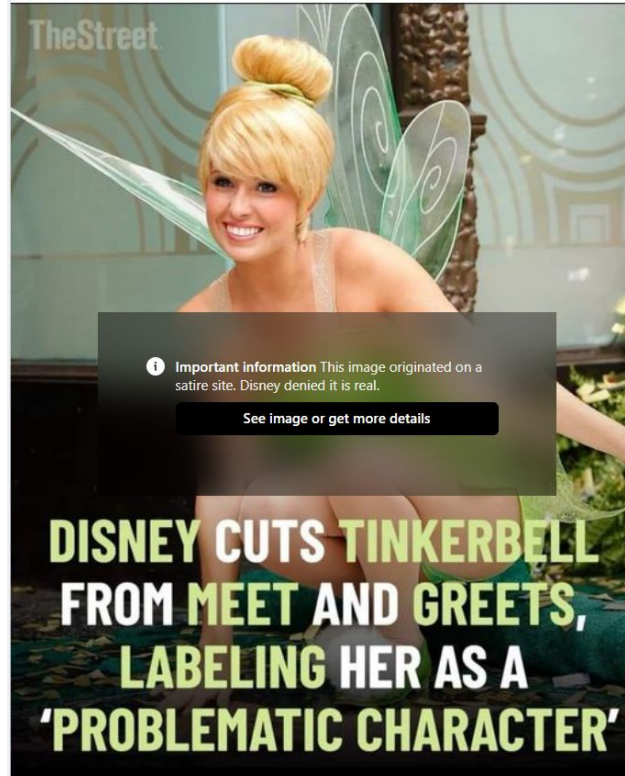
# Why not turn the order around?



- **Zero clicks** to get to the **true information**
- **One click** to get to a **longer summary**, two clicks to the **full info**
- **Still two clicks** to get to the **false information**
- Users **can't avoid the true information** anymore

# If the true information is there, why even hide anything?

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# Instead of saying there is missing context, why not just give it?

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Biden is walking towards and talking to a paratrooper who just landed next to the group (source: Lead Stories). Click for more context.



# This is one of the few things X is doing well with Community Notes



## Readers added context they thought people might want to know

This is not Emily Hewertson. The person who threw the milkshake has been identified as Victoria Thomas-Bowen. A 25 year old Labour supporter.

[thesun.co.uk/news/28303579/...](https://thesun.co.uk/news/28303579/)

Do you find this helpful?

Rate it

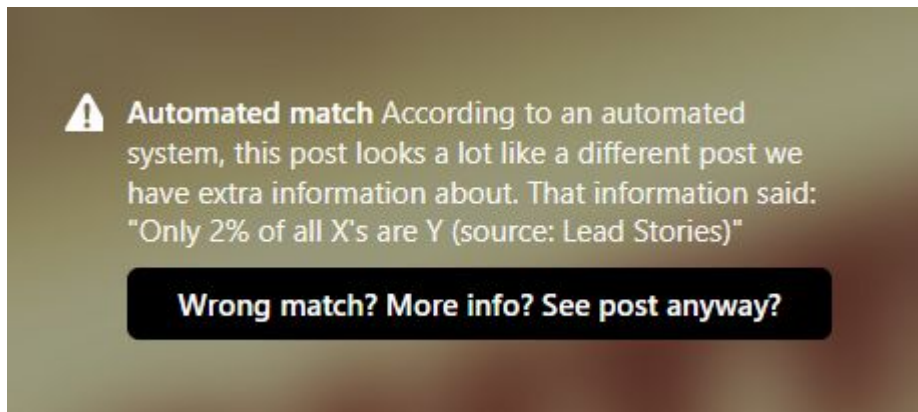
- Doesn't hide anything
- Gives you just the information
- Friendly language
- ...of course, the information is not always reliable because X doesn't use fact-checkers (that's a different issue...)

# While you are at it...

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Can something be done about the labels on automated matches? Make it **more obvious** it was an automated match, provide the **information up front** and leave the **possibility open** that it was a **mistake...**

Suggestion:



# Initial labels can entirely avoid harsh words like “False”, “Penalize” or even “Fact Check” (which can be triggering for some audiences)

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- Just a **friendly label** giving more info...
- Add **sourcing** to the message if there are **concerns** about things sounding too much like **“Meta’s editorial voice”**.
  - According to [fact checker] this image is a deepfake...
  - This photo was taken in 1984, not last week (source: fact checker)
  - More information from [fact checker]: Only 2% of all...
- Short format & IFCN guidelines will **prevent** language that feels **editorializing** or **opinionated: just the facts please!**

# “Inform First”

Benefits of redesigning  
the labels with this  
principle in mind

- **Fewer censorship accusations**
  - **Friendlier** user experience
  - **Reduced frustration** over labels erroneously applied by automated matching
  - **Less abuse** towards fact-checkers over label-induced irritations
  - Fact-checkers **can still be shielded** from abuse if needed by two-click friction before users reach their website
  - An inform treatment that **actually informs**
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# There might be technical or other reasons why this is difficult

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- Standardized message formats
- Limited engineering resources
- Localization issues
- Competing product needs
- Legal questions
- ...



But if one leg of the “Remove, Reduce, Inform” triad is broken...

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...it is time to

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Besides, it would keep Meta well ahead of the competition to get that last missing anti-misinformation feature in... 😊

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Feature/Platform	Meta	TikTok	YouTube	X	TruthSocial
Owner doesn't repost misinformation	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Remove/Reduce misinformation	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Info from certified fact checkers	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Misinformation labels	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Labels that give the information first	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗

# Thanks for listening!

Questions, comments, feedback: [maarten@leadstories.com](mailto:maarten@leadstories.com)

