Let’s sell journalism.

Because great journalism is a great product.

Rohin Dharmakumar, CEO, The Ken
About *The Ken*

- India’s first & largest subscriptions-only digital media platform
- Launched in October 2016, we publish one exclusive business story every weekday
- Our subscription model has 2 parts
  - High quality journalism = original, deeply reported and analytical
  - Premium pricing = an annual subscription is Rs.2750/$108
- We cover technology, business, science and healthcare using a decidedly India-specific lens
- In Q4 2018, we crossed 10,000 active subscribers
- Growing at 100+% annually for the last two years
Fewer, deeper stories
Subscriptions or bust

• 100% focus since day 1
• No trials
• No leaky paywalls
• No ads
• No syndication
• No discounts
The traditional journalism construct

• Ignorance, distrust and antipathy between editorial & business sides
  • From editorial towards business models and revenue
  • From business towards journalistic ethics and craft

• Strict “Chinese walls” between functions

• No common ground on what the product is
  • Is it the journalism?
  • Or is it the readers?
But, product tail wags the journalism dog

I just cancelled my @WSJ subscription after being a reader and subscriber for 39 years. Because they don't recognize me across my phone or tablet and force me to log in every time. The app works but links from Twitter or elsewhere don't open the app or deep link. Bye Bye.

7:57 PM - 11 Feb 2019

74 Retweets 1,167 Likes

1/ This is 100% right. I pay to subscribe to @nytimes, @washingtonpost, @WSJ, @NewYorker, @WIRED, @VanityFair and others. All fail to recognize me as a subscriber, especially when I link to a story from within, say, Twitter. This is a huge fail & a threat to the sub model.

10:07 AM - 17 Feb 2019

64 Retweets 541 Likes
Instead, journalism as a product

• Journalism was, is and should be a product

• Product, engineering and marketing are distinct but connected
  • All share a common objective with editorial: win & retain subscribers

• Break “Chinese walls”, but ethically
  • Collaboration is *not* interference

• Managed and run like a SaaS company

• “Journalism as a Service”, or JaaS
Multiple products

• The best guarantor for independent journalism = a strong, diversified and sustainable revenue model

• Multiple sources of revenue, each growing at 100+% annually
  • Retail subscriptions
  • Corporate subscriptions – over 5 dozen companies are subscribers
  • Campus subscriptions – world’s best b-schools are subscribers (HBS, ISB, IIMA)
  • Patron subscriptions

• Recurring revenue as a percentage of total revenue is growing
In control of our growth channels

• 100% of visitors and subscribers acquired organically
  • Zero paid acquisition till date
• Diversified reader acquisition
  • 25% via own emails
  • 25% via direct visits
  • 25% via search
• Not dependent on platform gatekeepers
Q&A
Rohin Dharmakumar
CEO, The Ken