

RawStory.COM - Media Giraffe Profile

RawStory.COM

Byrne John - Executive Editor

"I consider myself a reporter. I consider it journalism. We are kind of a hybrid of a blog and reporting. People think of us as a blog. We are on the liberal blog advertising network so we kind of had to be a blog and we added comments to comply with their regulations for the network."

John Byrne, in a Media Giraffe interview, April 6, 2006

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About

UPDATE:

What are ground rules for wire service quoting a blog?

At age 23, John Byrne was making a partial living filing medical records in his father's Boston office and free-lance writing for The Boston Globe -- having graduated from Oberlin College with a degree in history and English.

Intrigued by the success of The Drudge Report, he started RawStory.COM in an attempt, he now says, to "highlight under-reported news." As a self-described muckraking college journalist, he didn't want to continue writing on issues like traffic lights.

So, he created his own opportunity. With 450,000 daily visitors to the site, RawStory generates enough advertising revenue to pay Byrne, one reporter and a business manager working from Byrne's Washington, D.C. apartment, where Byrne relocated from Boston last year.

"It makes a comfortable living for me now, it is just financially unstable, because we rely on third party companies to sell our advertising and their rates are going down," says Burne. "You have to reach a certain critical mass before you can sell advertising in volume on your own. We're just about there."

To deal with the crisis of declining third-party ad payments, Byrne hired a business manager three months ago and did a fund-raising drive among readers. He cut back from two reporters plus himself to one. "And it is really hard to do investigative reporting at the same time you are doing a site without putting in 14 to 16 hours a day."

Byrne now says he is thinking about setting up a non-profit organization which would fund investigative reporting for his site and others.

Byrne attributes reason for traffic growth since RawStory's Feb. 2004 founding entirely to his emphasis on breaking news, either links or original reporting. The site was originally engineered to link to other reports, but Byrne's dissatisfaction with the main-stream media inspired him to create something more. "Media has such a bad sense of priorities," says Byrne. "Media is always looking for controversy, while also minimalizing facts. We, at Raw Story, rely on a counter-strategy to the media's patriarchal system."

The success of Raw Story can be attributed to the concentration on the reader, a typical quality of blog-based sites. "We are responding to the reader, and we rely on what people send in," says Byrne. The site urges reader submissions, and Byrne promotes a diverse workforce, looking to recruit foreign and metropolitan correspondents, as well as columnists of varied backgrounds. "We do a lot of our own reporting, pushing stories that would otherwise go unnoticed," Byrne says of the Raw Story mission.

"The Downing Street memo was our crowing achievement," says Byrne, referring to the secret British Prime Minister meeting minutes that revealed President Bush's plan to invade Iraq while also doctoring intelligence on the issue (<http://www.downingstreetmemo.com>).

"It was covered in Britain, and it finally got coverage over here. We were checking on the authenticity of the documents, and we were very careful before we reported," he explains about Raw Story's part in exposing this controversy.

But, as Byrne says, the site isn't interested in the overall financial situation of the project. "The difference between us and big media is the fact that we aren't driven by the bottom-line. We're driven by the need to report accurately what is going on."

The Raw Story is interested primarily in informing the American public about important events not covered by traditional media. They strive for accurate and informative reporting. "We're concerned with the country and not making a story," concludes Byrne.

OTHER RESOURCES:

[Wikipedia page on The Raw Story](#)

[Rolling Stone article on bloggers and traditional media](#)

[Conservative group asks RawStory to remove document](#)

Links

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