

NEWSPAPER CHAIN SPLITTING FROM AD SITE



Village Voice Media has recently made the decision to part way with a controversial advertising site, Backpage.com. It will be creating an entirely new company to help with the struggling newspapers and websites. The president of Village Voice Media recently made the announcement about the decision to part ways with Backpage.com. Over the past few years, there has been a lot of controversy surrounding Backpage. Many critics believe that the website promotes sex trafficking via the classified section, which is primarily available for adults. These critics have been urging various advertisers to stop working with the company and a number of advertisers, both local and national, have decided to part ways with Backpage for that exact reason. Village Voice Media has also had to lay off a number of employees around the country. With the new plan in effect, two shareholders of Village Voice Media, Mike Lacey and Jim Larkin, are going to be operating the Backpage.com website on their own. A separate holding company which was recently created, the Voice Media Group, will be managing the different weekly newspapers as well as the websites for all 13 of these papers. The executive editor for VVM, Christine Brennan, will help to manage these weekly newspapers and their websites. Funding for the Voice Media Group was provided by a number of private investors. The Voice Media Group will be headquartered in the area of Denver, Colorado. Tobias would not provide any other information on the financing aspect of this new business venture. He has said, "Backpage has been a distraction - there's no question about it - to the core (editorial) properties." Part of the spinoff means that the classified section will no longer be featured in the weekly newspapers or on the websites for these papers either. For the past two years, ever since 2010, anti-trafficking activists have been putting pressure on removing the online classified section on websites, specifically Craigslist. However, as the pressure was put on Craigslist to remove this section, the vast majority of the adult advertisements were moved on over to Backpage.com. The adult advertising brings in millions of dollars each and every month and a total of around 80 percent of the revenue generated was going straight to Backpage.com. The decision to part ways with the company appears to be an aim at pleasing the activists who had concerns about sex trafficking. A number of companies, including Best Buy, IHOP, and Macy's have all decided to stop advertising with the VVM publications due to this controversy with Backpage.com.

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