

This week's news was full of unicorns and conspiracy theories

Maddyness provides you with a quick digest of three news items to keep you up to date with the startup scene, emerging trends and other noteworthy stories.

Temps de lecture : minute

9 October 2020

MessageBird has become Europe's newest unicorn

Based in Amsterdam, [MessageBird](#) allows users to centralise all communication so as to deliver absolutely seamless customer support. Spanning WhatsApp, LiveChat, Voice and more - MessageBird makes sure everything is in one place and thus drives better engagement and response time.

A recent round of investment has brought the total valuation of this Omnichannel Platform as-a-Service (OPaaS) up to a massive £2.3B. It seems the program's vision for a future of omnichannel customer interaction is well on its way to becoming a reality. It looks set to capitalise on a post-COVID-19 world where businesses are experimenting with novel ways of communicating with their customers.

MessageBird's 15,000 users include Deliveroo and Heineken and the company is currently deliberating the prospect of an IPO. "We are running the company as if we were preparing for an IPO, but whether we will actually list or not is yet to be decided," Robert Vis, CEO and founder, told [Sifted](#). Although, for the meantime, he says, "I just want to live in a world

where I can text with a business and never get stuck waiting on hold again”.

Octopus Energy are going to create 1,000 jobs in renewable energy tech

Onto another tech unicorn – the time from the UK. Octopus was named as such in May this year following a £300M investment from Australia’s Origin. Its most recent announcement aligned nicely with Boris Johnson’s decisive move towards a green recovery at the start of this week. He announced a plan to power all UK homes with wind by 2030, and in so doing create “hundreds of thousands, if not millions of jobs”.



Read also

Coal-powered u-turns and plastic-eating enzymes. Can we save the world?

Octopus is running full steam ahead with the plan, and aspires to a future where the UK is “the Silicon Valley of energy”. New recruits will be placed across London, Manchester, Brighton, Warwick, and Leicester and will work to better smart grid technologies on a team that’s “facilitating the development of new and emerging industries like electric vehicles, electric heating and vertical farming”.

Regarding this great news for green tech, the Prime Minister said,

“It’s UK tech companies like Octopus who will ensure we continue to build back greener and remain a world leader in pioneering renewable energy, leading the path to net zero whilst creating thousands of skilled jobs.”



Tech companies respond to conspiracy theorists QAnon

And now for something completely different... You may have heard about the astronomical rise of conspiracy theorist group QAnon. Its central premise is that President Trump is secretly waging a war against a Satanist, paedophilic group of government, media and business elite.

Sounds pretty niche, right? Well the theory, as well as a collection of roundabout spin-offs, has been gaining a lot of traction while the world deals with the overall weirdness of the COVID-19 pandemic. The BBC says it looks like hundreds of thousands of people are at least partially convinced.

But what does this have to do with the tech world? Even though QAnon's been spreading rumours on the Internet for 3 years now, Big Tech are beginning to react - perhaps due to fears the misinformation will impact the upcoming US election result.

This week, Facebook announced its decision to ban any groups openly promoting QAnon-aligned thinking across all its platforms (inc. Instagram). Ecommerce sites Depop and Etsy have both banned QAnon merchandise.

Following an investigation by *Vice*, which discovered a brand called Killer Merch selling QAnon paraphernalia, Depop said,

“We explicitly prohibit any content promoting misleading or untrue information that incites violence or hatred of any kind and will be removing any accounts or listings selling ‘QAnon’ merchandise.”