

# 'Young pretender' KOMI Group targets social publishing giants as headcount and revenue set to double

A "young pretender" to social publishers such as LadBible and UniLad is on course to double its headcount and revenue in 2022 as it gears up for "scalable growth".

Ancoats firm KOMI Group was established in 2016 by Andrew Trotman, Ryan Williams and Matt Thomas after first connecting through direct messages on Twitter.

The company started with growing 15 sport-related Twitter pages, which were mainly parody based, before launching its first global brand called It's Gone Viral on Facebook towards the back end of 2016.

It [rebranded to KOMI Group in 2020](#) and restructured to form dedicated social media (KOMI Media), marketing (KOMI Social) and licensing (ARK) teams.

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In an exclusive interview with BusinessLive Mr Trotman, who serves as the group's managing director, opens up about how the business was formed, his plans for future growth as well as the potential danger of its fortunes being so closely linked to that of the Silicon Valley giants.

## Why did you found the business?

Mr Trotman said: "Personally, I have always been a cliché entrepreneurial type. I left university and created a membership e-commerce-type platform and I was advertising that

purely through Twitter.

“This was about eight or nine years ago now and I did that for a few years and I created this business which was successful which was doing six figures.

“But I realised at that time the power of social media and how effective it was as a marketing tool.

“So I started to advertise for betting companies as well and I was using these large networks and communities, again on Twitter, and paying them large sums to advertise.

“No one was really discussing what influencer marketing was back then. That was not a phrase that was used but when you look back now you realise that was exactly what I was doing.

“I realised that instead of paying people to do it, why don't I create these communities myself so I started on Twitter and started growing these large communities of sport fans and that's where I met my co-founders who were doing similar things at the time.

“We launched It's Gone Viral with the idea of creating a brand page and becoming one of the largest social brands in the UK.

“We fancied a crack at the likes of LadBible, UniLad and the BBC.”

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Mr Trotman told BusinessLive that “scalable growth” has always been a key focus for the group instead of growing “just for the sake of it”.




The group recently doubled its office space at Beehive Mill in Manchester after taking an additional 1,300 sqft on a six-year lease after it moved its operations from Rochdale to the site on Jersey Street in early 2020.

On average the company delivers over one billion views across its portfolio of pages each month while its agency and licensing teams have worked with brands including BBC Films, O2, Universal, Bud Light, Disney, Paddy Power, Mars, TikTok, Fray Bentos, Yo Sushi and Formula E.

The group currently has 55 members of staff but Mr Trotman said he expects that to get to 100 next year while he is aiming to get to 200 staff over the next three to four years.

Extra office space will be needed while the founders are also targeting doubling its revenue every year.

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## **What are your plans for the next few years?**

“The revenue came in slightly less than we wanted to last year but we still grew by 50% to that £2m mark which was nice and we are on track to double that this year”, Mr Trotman said.

“There’s a lot of companies growing really really fast but we have been around for four years and actually we are a bootstrap business so we have not taken any investment and got healthy cash balances.

“We wanted to create a foundation and a leadership team, give our employees what they actually want and create a culture where we can grow instead of exponentially grow and crash and burn.



The KOMI Group

“It’s all about scalable and attainable growth over pure growth over everything.

“It has always been our belief that the business should make money.

“We have always invested all growth back into the business.

“By not taking external funding you have full control of what you do and all your growth plans are completely defined by you as a board and your destiny is in your own hands.

“We can still fund ourselves and grow on our own terms.”

**How does it feel for your business to be so linked to the fortunes of Silicon Valley-based tech firms?**

The fortunes of the group have been closely linked to that of the Silicon Valley giants since it was launched in 2016.

The potential risks of that aren’t lost on Mr Trotman and he and his other founders have come up with a way to protect themselves.

“We are absolutely aware of that and it’s been a thing for us as a business as we grow and mature about how we diversify into other areas”, he said.



The KOMI Group

“We know what we are good at so how can we use that to help

other people and what other projects and divisions can we create that leverage that.

“The KOMI brand is over leveraged in terms of social media, absolutely, and I think it was Covid which really gave us a kick up the arse to expand and invest in other areas of the business.

“We are very much linked to the big social media company’s fortunes but hopefully we are combatting that.”

**Do you think that social media is a force for good?**

“It is a force for good if used correctly. It does have sides that do need to be tightened up and regulations can be brought in to ensure that people do use them in a better way.

“I think people sometimes forget that we are still in the super early stages of what social media is and how they operate.





The KOMI Group

“It has been interesting, even over the last five years, to see the platforms realise how they operate and the impact that they have and how people interact with them.

“I’m sure we will continue to find better ways to use them but personally we have obviously enjoyed the experience and there are loads of good stories out there as well.”

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