



## Business Plan 2015

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# Executive Summary

Positive News is the world's leading and longest established publication dedicated to positive journalism. We are a values led, not-for-profit organisation based in London, UK.

Like all news organisations at this time, we need to adapt to unprecedented change in our industry. We are innovating in order to become sustainable and meet the growing demand for our journalism.

The organisation is now raising capital through a 'community share offer'. The funds will be used to develop a new membership scheme, build a new digital proposition, re-launch the print publication, develop new revenue streams and expand the core team.

Moving to a new structure as a cooperative organisation owned by our readers, we will build a community that is invested long-term in our success.

We're creating a movement for a more balanced and constructive media, and an organisation for and owned by people who want to stay informed and be inspired.

**We share journalism that inspires people to be part of the change they want to see in the world.**

We are achieving our mission through solution-focused reporting on social and environmental issues. We are also developing and promoting the field of 'constructive journalism' across the news media industry, through media training and partnerships.

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

- o Serve increasing demand for positive news: antidote to public perceptions of 'doom and gloom' sensationalist media.
- o Underutilised brand with credibility to form lucrative partnerships and engage wider audience.
- o Loyal and dedicated following of readers, supporters and donors.

# KEY DEVELOPMENTS

## **Membership**

Create a new membership scheme focused on the opportunity to access and support positive journalism and join a community of shared values; develop member benefits.

## **Digital growth**

Investment in website and social media marketing: targeting younger market, low cost of acquisition; create digital membership/subscription products.

**Positive News' Facebook following increased 575% in the past 18 months, to 140,000.**

## **Grow print sales**

Move to magazine format to create a higher value product reflecting the quality of the content; drive print subscriptions; launch retail sales.

## **New services**

Develop new revenue-generating services including events featuring inspiring speakers, media training courses, and content sales to other media.

## **Provide more content**

Develop content partnerships with other media and build a website that drives more user-generated content.

## **Target brand partnerships and advertising**

Potential for rapid growth in revenue from ethical brands; develop a sales team; build partnerships with organisations that share our values and align with our purpose.

## **Employ larger core team**

Providing the capacity and key skills to grow; currently only one full-time employee and two part-time.

# Company History

Positive News was founded in 1993 by Shauna Crockett-Burrows.

For the last 22 years it has brought stories of positive change to hundreds of thousands of people. Increasingly it is inspiring other media too; now offering media training and consultancy, as well gaining an expanding level of press coverage.

Positive News has a loyal and consistent supporter base of 3,500 subscribers to its quarterly print publication. Its website currently receives 30,000 unique visitors monthly, and it has a social media following of 150,000.

Seán Dagan Wood became Editor-in-Chief when the founder passed away in 2012 and has overseen the survival and development of the organisation.

Since its inception Positive News had a degree of dependency upon a small number of key benefactors – a source of funding which is no longer reliable. Now there is a critical need for the organisation to become self-sustaining.

Positive News created a media niche that is ripe for growth.

With our planned community share offer, we hope to secure the capital required to transform the organisation in order to become sustainable within three years and inspire hundreds of thousands of new readers.



# Industry Environment

## MARKET OVERVIEW

There is growing public demand for more positive news content; an antidote to the 'doom and gloom' sensationalism often at the forefront of mainstream media.

At the same time, a wave of alternative media are focusing on providing a more positive lens on the world, paving the way for a more diverse journalism. As digital technology disrupts the industry, traditional media are also questioning old assumptions about what the news should cover. We regularly receive enquires from across the world from media professionals, and from new and established organisations, who want to learn from or replicate our approach.

There is a growing field of 'constructive journalism'. This involves techniques to bring more positive elements into conventional reporting. It draws upon a growing body of empirical evidence about the impact of news upon people's wellbeing, social agency and how they engage with and share content. Positive News is at the forefront of this journalistic field – exemplifying rigorous constructive reporting and educating the industry and public about it.

**Research by the University of Southampton (UK) in 2014 found an overwhelming stated preference for positive news stories over negative news stories. It also found that positive news stories had a positive effect on people's mood and gave rise to significantly higher motivation to take positive actions (eg donate to charity, be environmentally friendly, make opinions known).**

## COLLABORATOR REVIEW

As a not-for-profit social enterprise, our strategy is to pursue co-operative, collaborative relationships in order to generate the highest impact upon our social mission.

Rather than seeing others as competitors, we will capitalise on our position as the market leader in positive journalism by providing content, training and consultancy to other media.

We will also consider the viability of franchising our brand. Assuming the success of our cooperative ownership structure and membership-focused business model, there is also potential to support other media in pursuing this pioneering approach.

In terms of our editorial collaboration, we will develop the **Positive News ecosystem**: a network of alternative news sources from which we curate content alongside our own original journalism. The goal is for Positive News to be a hub for the best positive and constructive content.

# Product

## JOURNALISM

Our news articles are the cornerstone of our offering. Without good content there is no lasting audience and no revenue. A key requirement for growing our audience is providing a higher volume of articles across a wider range of subject categories.

### Constructive journalism

Constructive journalism is rigorous, compelling reporting that includes solution-focused angles or gives prominence to positive aspects of story. While maintaining core journalistic functions, it approaches its subject matter with a constructive mindset in order to engage the audience and contribute to a fuller picture of truth. All Positive News content will meet this standard.

### Syndicated content

Creating a network of content providers, each specialising in a news niche, the [Positive News ecosystem](#) gives the content providers access to a wider audience and gives our audience access to more content that matters.

The content will be reviewed by our editorial team to ensure our values and journalistic standards are maintained.

### User generated content

Building upon the community we will create with our cooperative ownership structure, we will build a network of citizen journalists as a way of providing a greater volume of useful, interesting and unique articles, particularly on a local geographical level.

A key requirement of our [new website](#) will be to engage our members and provide for a hierarchy of user privileges to allow our editorial team to work with our community to review and manage content.



## Visual content

Imagery will have increasing importance in the new magazine format and in the growth of digital where photography plays a vital role. A greater editorial emphasis will be placed on compelling imagery and infographics.

## Digital content

Digital media requires a variety of format changes such as tailored headlines and standfirsts, and strong visual imagery. Video content will also form an increasingly important role. With new digital expertise brought into the team, content will be produced and optimised specifically for different channels across our website and social media, and for search engines.



## PUBLICATION:

### Magazine format

The current print product is undermined by its thin newsprint format, which doesn't suit its frequency as a quarterly publication and doesn't do justice to the quality of the content.

We plan to move to a magazine format to give the content a setting that raises the perceived value to the product; gives it a format that has more shelf life (in outlets or people's homes); and enables it to have a suitable cover price and to be retailed.

## Website relaunch

The current Positive News website, [positivenews.org.uk](http://positivenews.org.uk), has seen little design or usability updates in recent years and is now looking dated – particularly on tablets and mobiles. An updated design in line with [new brand guidelines](#) will bring much needed credibility to our digital presence.

## Content is king... but our king requires new clothes.

### KEY FEATURES

- [Responsive web-design](#): adaptive layout for optimal readability on all devices: PCs, tablets and phones
- [Improved usability](#): simplified navigation and content structure, easy reading experience
- [More imagery and infographics](#): greater use of graphic design to convey information and use of photography to convey a story
- [Interaction and participation](#): user profiles; ways to recognise and draw on audience expertise in response to articles; include features such as in-line commenting
- [Social media integration](#): allowing sign in/login from social media platforms; increased ease of sharing and commenting
- [Giftwall](#): a donation oriented version of a paywall used in news websites. With our giftwall concept, access can be gained for no charge by registering, during which a donation is encouraged

## DESIGN

Packaging is vitally important to any product. In line with the planned [branding update](#) and prominence of visual content, the design of the print publication and website – typography, layout and digital usability – will receive greater attention.

# Marketing

## COMMUNITY SHARE OFFER CAMPAIGN

### #OwnTheMedia

A large-scale online crowdfunding campaign will launch on 8 June 2015 and run until 8 July 2015, as the means to market our community share offer.

We will use Crowdfunder.co.uk, the UK's leading crowdfunding website, as a platform to manage and promote the campaign.

As well as raising capital, this campaign will be a launchpad for engaging and growing a larger and committed audience. Momentum will be maintained with further marketing.

## BRANDING

The visual design of Positive News needs to be updated to better represent the positioning and credibility of the brand. Brand guidelines will be developed in time for the website and magazine re-launch to help create a consistent, visually compelling and professional brand: forward looking, reliable and engaging.

"If social is the future of media, then optimistic stories may be media's future" - TIME magazine



## TARGET MARKET

Our target market is typically ethical consumers; 60% female. The channel largely dictates the age and location of the audience.

### Print

- Majority over age 40
- Live predominantly in UK
- Long-term supporters

### Digital

- Majority under age 40
- Large proportion non-UK
- Newer to Positive News

To date print readers have provided the vast majority of revenue in both subscriptions and donations. The digital market offers the greatest potential to grow our audience.

Our offline audience will be engaged through direct mail, events, email, and telephone. Our online audience will be engaged through our website, social media, and email.

## POSITIONING

Positive News aims to be regarded as the primary source for **high quality inspiring journalism** by both the public and media.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media forms a key part of the marketing strategy to stimulate digital growth and website traffic. Currently only 30-60 minutes a day is spent on social media tasks, yet we have seen rapid growth especially on Facebook, where our following has grown 575% in the past 18 months to 140,000 fans.

Online campaigns will be developed and direct interaction with users will be a key part of the social media strategy, building loyalty with the digital audience.

Content and headlines optimised for social media, and an added focus on compelling imagery, will generate significantly more growth in both fans and subsequent site traffic. We expect to grow our Facebook fan base to 500,000 before the end of 2016.

# Strategy

## COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

A minimum of £200,000 is required to finance the implementation of our new business model.

Previous donation appeals, surveys, and feedback from readers have shown an extremely high level of engagement and passionate support, which suggests that a 'community share offer' is an ideal way to generate the capital needed to enable Positive News to survive and thrive.

This involves creating a cooperative legal structure for the organisation and issuing shares on a one-member-one-vote basis. This will be marketed primarily as a social rather than financial investment.

**An opportunity to support Positive News and its mission and become one of its owners with a say in how it is run.**

As well as being an inspiring, ethical and democratic ownership structure for a media organisation, the cooperative structure creates a strong bond and literal sense of ownership with members – building a community of shared interest, brand loyalty and making them active participants in achieving our purpose.

The legal form we adopt will be a **Community Benefit Society**. This new organisation will become the sole owner of our current not-for-profit company Positive News Publishing Ltd, where the publishing operations will continue to take place. The board of the company will be appointed by the board of the community benefit society and shall be accountable to them.

The community benefit society will own Positive News' intellectual property, which will include the **Positive News Charter** – a new document that sets out the purpose, values and key operating principles of the organisation. The board of the society will ensure the publishing company operates in line with the charter.

## MEMBERSHIP

A new membership scheme will be the foundation for building and monetising a committed audience.

Rather than just selling a publication, access to our print and digital content and subscriptions will be part of a broader membership offer. Our membership model moves beyond the traditional journalism notion of a passive 'audience'. Instead, it focuses on building valuable relationships with members, by offering them a range of services that they need.

## Our members join a community of shared interest that supports positive journalism.

As media consumption patterns continue to evolve, the membership model will reduce our dependency on print revenues and provide sustainable income while growing the digital audience.

Member benefits will be developed, such as privileged participation on our website, discounts on our events and other services, and offers from partner organisations.

Membership will also connect with our new cooperative ownership structure, where shareholders will be 'investor members'.

## PRODUCT RELAUNCH

A vital part of our positioning as an innovator and market leader, and to support revenue growth, is to create a more engaging product online and in print. Our new website and magazine will be launched in late 2015.

### New magazine

To improve print subscription and advertising revenue and generate retail sales, there will be a newly designed magazine format.

### Website

Our current digital offering has seen minimal investment however there is significant potential for growth. We're planning a new innovative and user-friendly website.

## DIVERSIFICATION

We will develop new services that support our purpose and provide additional benefit to our members and the public, while creating new revenue streams to ensure long-term financial sustainability. These include events featuring inspiring speakers, and media training courses.

## POSITIVE NEWS ECOSYSTEM

Our core editorial team currently manages a larger number of freelance journalists and subeditors. This network will continue and be expanded for creating premium original content. But we also plan to create an 'ecosystem' of media with shared values and to be a hub for its content – creating a greater volume and diversity of articles for our audience. Our content partners will gain exposure to a wider audience.

## CHARITY STATUS

We plan to apply for charity status for our new community benefit society, and for our audience to be members of the charity, rather than merely subscribers or readers. This would give us the ability to claim Gift Aid on membership income and donations, and provide increased access to grants.

# Revenue Streams

## MEMBERSHIP

Print subscription fees, currently at £20 per year (with a significant number of long-term subscribers on lower previous rates), will be replaced with a membership fee of £30, with all current subscribers transitioned to the new fee upon renewal. Membership will include access to print or digital versions of the magazine as well as additional [member benefits](#) that will be introduced as the scheme is developed.

## BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

Positive News is ideally placed to serve a growing demand for niche advertising from [ethical consumer brands](#); we can sell the value of our engaged, targeted membership, and the positive association of our content, brand and community.

Comprehensive promotional packages will be sold to brands, with the intention of creating long-term partnerships with those that align with our values and purpose. Packages will include sponsored content, advertising, product listings, and social media promotion.

## RETAIL SALES

Re-launch as a magazine with a cover price, which is retailed. Initially sold in [independent shops](#), expanding to high street chains.

## MEDIA TRAINING & CONSULTANCY

Working in partnership with the [Constructive Journalism Project](#), we will deliver training and consultancy to media organisations wishing to adopt the practices and principles of constructive journalism. With very little marketing to date, demand is currently exceeding our capacity to deliver.



## EVENTS

As part of our strategy to have membership at the heart of our business model – offering our audience more than just content – we plan to run events, with revenue from [ticket sales and event sponsorship](#). Events will add value by offering our audience the opportunity to interact as a community and learn more about issues and ideas covered by our journalism. Discounts will be available to our members, but they will be open to the public.

## DONATIONS

Positive News has consistently attracted donations from readers and other supporters, and we will continue to pursue donation income in support of our core revenue streams. In particular through deeper engagement with key investor members and donors, by encouraging legacies, and through our [‘giftwall’](#) concept where online readers have free access to content but if they aren't members they are encouraged to make a donation.

## CONTENT SALES

With evidence emerging of how positive or solution-focused content creates more engagement and sharing, the media industry are beginning to realise its potential to drive online traffic and revenues. This gives us an opportunity to [sell content](#) to other publishers. Meanwhile ethical consumer brands are seeking content to engage their customer bases, which we can provide.

## Secondary Revenue

Other sources of income include grants (eg journalism, innovation or development grants), and in the longer-term, new online services such as an online shop, ethical job directory, merchandise, as well as publishing, editorial and communications services for third parties.

# Our Team

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The founding board of our new community benefit society shall be comprised as follows:

### Seán Dagan Wood

Seán is a media professional with a passion for personal and social transformation. As the Editor-in-Chief of Positive News and Co-Founder of the Constructive Journalism Project, he is a leader in the field of positive and constructive journalism and speaks internationally on the subject. His vision is for a media that informs, inspires and empowers.

Seán joined Positive News in 2009, becoming its editor in 2010 and also director of the company in 2012. He provides the strategic and editorial vision for Positive News.

### Danielle Batist

Danielle is a journalist and media consultant, who over the past 14 years has reported on social change all around the world for print and digital outlets including Al Jazeera, the BBC and the Guardian. In 2014 she co-founded the Constructive Journalism Project and is also the Founder of Journopreneur, a platform to help freelancers adapt to the changing media landscape and make independent journalism sustainable. Previously she was Editor of the International Network of Street Papers.

Danielle believes that while both the medium and the message are changing, the need for good storytelling remains.

### Bart van der Vliet

Bart is a leadership consultant and executive coach specialising in responsible leadership. He supports leaders in organisations to achieve personal, social and organisational transformation. Bart is associate partner at Better Business, an international consultancy that helps clients deliver results with a purpose, and chairman of the charity Street Child.

## CORE TEAM

With only one full-time staff member, otherwise reliant on part-time and junior staff and freelancers, the core team needs more skills and experience to realise the benefits of this well-established, pioneering brand. The first key appointments would be a **CEO** and an **Executive Editor**.

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Leading on the business and editorial strategies, innovation and partnerships.

### CEO (NEW APPOINTMENT)

Responsible for the growth and sustainability of the organisation; managing all non-editorial activity: sales, marketing, finance, HR.

### EXECUTIVE EDITOR (NEW APPOINTMENT)

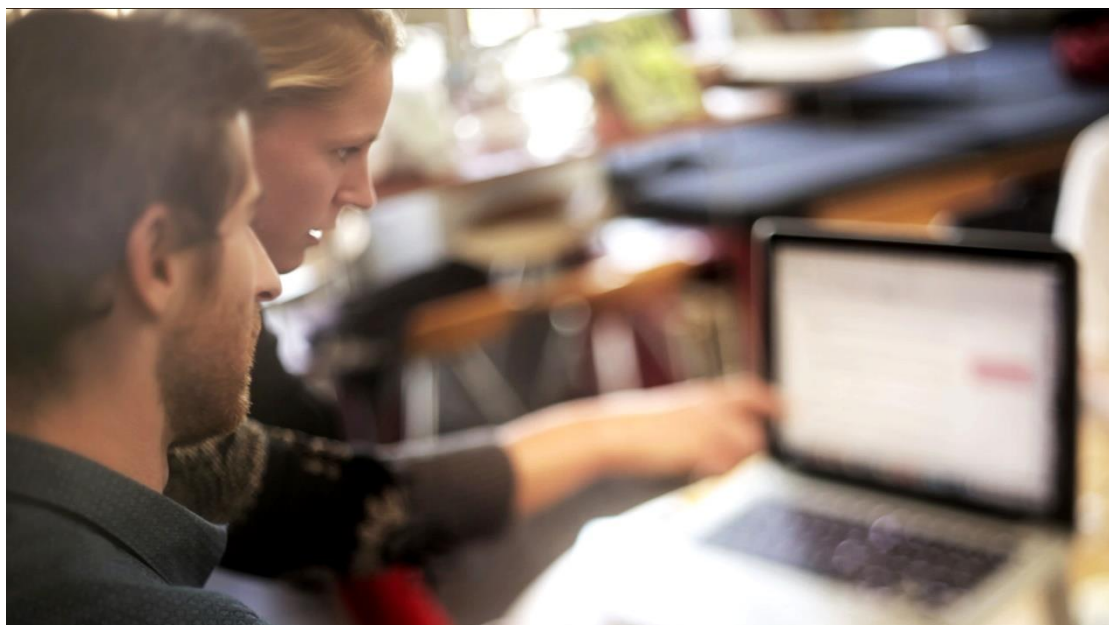
Managing the editorial team, planning content, developing editorial strategies and being responsible for ensuring every piece of content meets our journalistic standards; overseeing press and public relations.

### ASSISTANT EDITOR

Supporting the Executive Editor, managing content production and publication.

### ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

Managing all administrative processes; ensuring high-level service to our community of members.



## FUTURE APPOINTMENTS

The following additional roles are planned in line with growth:

### DIGITAL MANAGER

Responsible for growth of online audience and development of digital products and services; managing social media; working closely with the editorial team to produce and optimise content specifically for website, social media and search engines

### SALES MANAGER

Focussed on driving partnership, sponsorship and advertising sales; identifying targets and building relationships with brands

### COMMUNITY MANAGER

A marketing, administrative and communications role focussed on engaging and managing our 'investor members', wider membership base, and other stakeholders

### EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Providing administrative support to senior staff

## BUSINESS PARTNERS

We plan to remain focussed on our core competences, outsourcing and building partnerships to fulfil key activities: design, printing & distribution, sales, accounting, web development, IT.

We seek to find organisations with shared values, which can become long-term partners.

# Financial Projections

	PREVIOUS	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>				
Membership, subscriptions & retail sales	46,980	167,065	230,367	265,869
Advertising, sponsorship & partnerships	17,158	28,165	43,203	59,604
Training & consultancy	1,500	24,800	40,600	69,200
Events	0	4,500	16,000	36,000
Donations	4,303	14,625	19,232	22,201
Other revenue	4,112	12,928	20,142	29,213
Fundraising income	62,000			
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>136,053</b>	<b>252,083</b>	<b>369,544</b>	<b>482,086</b>
<b>COST OF SALES</b>				
Editorial costs	13,658	32,640	45,446	57,639
Magazine production & distribution	45,320	62,120	73,711	85,172
Training delivery	657	4,632	9,664	15,528
Event costs	0	1,950	6,960	16,500
Other direct costs	6,202	13,660	20,559	26,554
<b>TOTAL COST OF SALES</b>	<b>65,836</b>	<b>115,002</b>	<b>156,340</b>	<b>201,393</b>
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>	<b>70,217</b>	<b>137,081</b>	<b>213,204</b>	<b>280,693</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>				
Salaries	41,897	173,348	177,682	183,710
Office & IT expenses	11,023	30,666	36,778	45,703
Marketing	2,503	6,434	10,368	16,987
Administration & accounting	4,054	6,688	7,700	8,942
General operating expenses	2,592	6,567	8,975	12,337
Travel expenses	2,285	3,428	5,141	7,712
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>64,355</b>	<b>227,130</b>	<b>246,644</b>	<b>275,391</b>
One-off Development Costs Y1		81,000		
<b>NET PROFIT/LOSS FOR YEAR</b>	<b>5,862</b>	<b>-171,050</b>	<b>-33,440</b>	<b>5,301</b>
<b>RESERVES</b>				
O/bal		5,862	34,813	1,372
Investment Capital		200,000		
Profit/Loss for year	5,862	-171,050	-33,440	5,301
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>5,862</b>	<b>34,813</b>	<b>1,372</b>	<b>6,673</b>

# Contact

For more information or to discuss investment, please contact us:

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