

UNFINISHED

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Welcome to the Unfinished newsletter, where we explore issues at the intersection of tech, ethics, and society.

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Today, we're making sense of a crazy week in social media news, and we're excited about a new podcast.

What we're thinking about

How things are getting dicier by the day on already dicey social-media platforms. This week, the *Boston Globe* published an op ed [calling for social media platforms](#) to do a better job cracking down on Spanish-language Russian propaganda, which is spreading like a rash on Twitter and Facebook. Many posts pushing debunked biolab conspiracy theories, for instance, have remained on the platforms after being flagged by users and watchdog groups alike. This is not a new problem, say misinformation experts, who note that Spanish-language propaganda — whether that's about the pandemic, the 2020 U.S. presidential election, or the Russian invasion of Ukraine — spreads on social and “tends to go unchecked and left up longer than it survives in English,” writes the *Globe*'s Marcela Garcia. Garcia calls it a major blindspot and calls on the tech giants to do better, fast.

🧐 Elon Musk says he's “[giving serious thought](#)” to the idea of creating a new social-media platform. For context on the entrepreneur's seemingly endless beef with Twitter — which he uses [quite a bit](#) to reach his nearly 80 million followers! — you can read [this piece from CNN](#).

⚡ In other social news, we have something from the department of Questionable Facebook Behavior. The *Washington Post* this week reported in an exclusive that Meta is paying a conservative political consulting firm to launch [a campaign to turn favor against TikTok](#), the influential Chinese app that is massively popular with young people who think (know?) Facebook is a thing of the past. TikTok is eating up [market share and audience](#) from Facebook, which for years has been [struggling to attract and retain younger folks](#).

Lobbying to curry influence or sway public opinion isn't new to Meta. As the *Post* reports: "Meta outspends all but six of the nation's biggest companies and industry groups in federal lobbying, paying more than \$20 million last year, according to [data compiled](#) by OpenSecrets." But it is notable that instead of taking aim at regulators or vocal detractors, they're going for TikTok.

In February, Facebook reported a first-ever decline in users. And now, it's engaging a firm that appears to be using oppo-research-style tactics to mount what sounds like an old-fashioned political smear campaign against its competitor. Like we said, it's getting dicey out there.

🥒 Is Frances Haugen on your radar? She has had an impressive career as a product manager at Google, Yelp, Pinterest, and most recently Facebook, where she saw things she couldn't unsee and then raised them to national — and then international — prominence in a now-famous whistleblowing case. This past autumn, she released a massive trove of documentation from inside Facebook, which led to a media blitz most notably at the [Wall Street Journal](#), which published a [series of pieces](#) based on her leaks. The top-line takeaway, as articulated by *WSJ*: "Facebook Inc. knows, in acute detail, that its platforms are riddled with flaws that cause harm, often in ways only the company fully understands."

Next, she [testified on Capitol Hill](#) about her experience, her allegation that the company failed to take sufficient action to protect children on the platform, and her belief that the company [broke securities law](#) by lying to its investors. She's now [working on a book](#), and last week sat down with Frank McCourt, the founder and CEO of Unfinished, to talk about ethics, technology, and the future. You can watch the recording in full [here](#).

🎁 TechCrunch has a new podcast! We are very excited to listen to it. It's about (yes) web3, and it's hosted by Lucas Matney and Anita Ramaswamy, who will "unpack and explain the latest crypto news, drama, and trends, breaking it down block-by-block for the crypto-curious." Grab your popcorn and listen to the intro pod [here](#).

Thank you for reading.

Follow Unfinished ([@byUnfinished](#)) and Damon ([@dlberes](#)) — who, reminder, is out on 🤔 leave, and back in a few weeks — on Twitter.

Have a great, restful weekend.

The Unfinished team

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