

# THE GROWTH OF THE NAZI BAR INDUSTRY [UPDATE-2]

2[NB: check the byline, thanks. Updates at the bottom of this post. /~Rayne]

“The purpose of a system is what it does.”  
– Stafford Beer

The subject of this post – Substack – is described as an American online newsletter platform. One might think it was social media and digital publishing, combined.

Launched eight years ago, it has been funded by multiple rounds of venture capital, with another round raised just this last month. One might think its end game was a for-profit business which would eventually be sold or operate on its own.

But to paraphrase cybernetics consultant Stafford Beer, what this business is is what it does.

It is not a profit-making venture though the founders and operations would have us believe it's *not yet* a for-profit business.

What Substack does includes “accidentally” pushing the message below to users’ phones this past week:



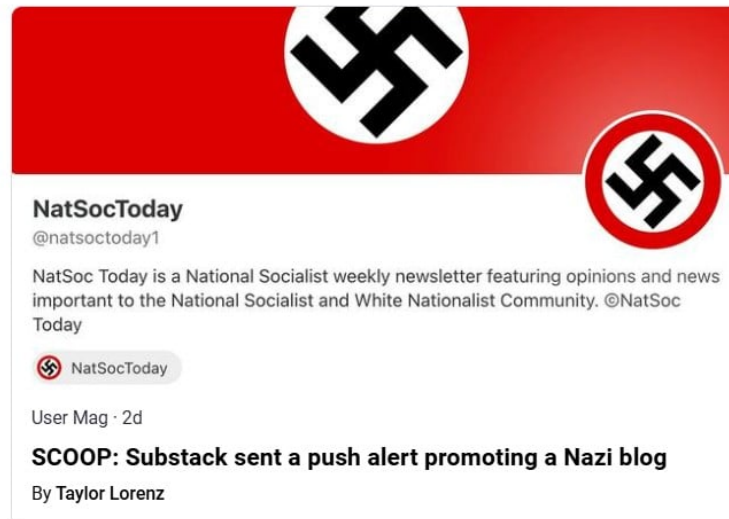
Techmeme

@Techmeme@techhub.social

Substack apologizes after sending a push alert encouraging some users to subscribe to NatSocToday, a Nazi newsletter advocating for a "White homeland" (Taylor Lorenz/User Mag)

[usermag.co/p/substack-sent-a-p...](https://usermag.co/p/substack-sent-a-p...)

[techmeme.com/250730/p21#a25073...](https://techmeme.com/250730/p21#a25073...)



Jul 30, 2025, 07:01 AM · 🌐

The platform offered a tepid apology.

Unfortunately this is lip service. The platform has been a publisher of far-right white supremacist, white nationalist, racist and antisemitic content – and literally Nazi content, as you can see from the screenshot above – from its inception.

It has refused to remove this hateful content in spite of being asked repeatedly to do so.

It has argued they must permit this hateful content, according to this Dec 21, 2023 note by co-founder and chief writing officer Hamish McKenzie:

I just want to make it clear that we don't like Nazis either—we wish no-one held those views. But some people do hold those and other extreme views. Given that, we don't think that censorship (including through demonetizing publications) makes the problem go away—in fact, it makes it worse.

As if legitimizing Nazi material by publishing  
and pushing it doesn't make it worse.

~ ~ ~

Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter  
necessitatem.

— William of Ockham

Perhaps you recognize this as Occam's Razor,  
contemporarily restated, "The simplest answer is  
often the best one."

What is Substack?

If a system is what it does, it's a Nazi  
publisher and promoter.

What if there are more answers to this question?  
Occam's Razor tells us the simplest answer is  
the same: Substack is a Nazi publisher and  
promoter.

It defends keeping hateful fascist content on  
its site even as it moderates and bars other  
content prohibited by its terms of service,  
including that by sex workers.

It's sought additional funding it has received  
to continue its operations publishing Nazi  
content.

Its funders have no problem with the business  
model relying on publishing Nazi content.

Substack is a Nazi publisher and promoter. It's  
that simple.

~ ~ ~

This thou must always bear in mind, what  
is the nature of the whole, and what is  
my nature, and how this is related to  
that, and what kind of a part it is of  
what kind of a whole; and that there is  
no one who hinders thee from always  
doing and saying the things which are  
according to the nature of which thou  
art a part.

— Marcus Aurelius

What are the other newsletters hosted by Substack to this whole?

250 of them complained in December 2023 about the Nazi content. While a few notable members did leave, most of the 250 complainants didn't leave en masse after McKenzie's response.

More members have complained since the Nazi promotion message was "accidentally" sent to some users this past week. A. R. Moxon wrote about the complaints on his own column, The Reframe.\*

Another tepid but actionless apology from Substack and no mass exodus of unhappy members ensued.

Substack's non-Nazi members are part of this ecosystem. They've become bartenders at the Nazi bar who may not like the pub's theme or some of its clientele, but they continue to serve the Nazis.

Ana Marie Cox wrote this past week about Substack's business model, noting that the financing trend isn't all that. Do read her post dated August 1 because there are tidbits within the numbers that are disquieting.

For example: one Substack funder is anti-ESG, a perspective aligned with Project 2025 (Cox notes this VC firm also employs Donnie Jr.). They threw in their capital in spite of the known Nazi problem. It's not a pretty picture.

Particular disturbing are the discussions between Substack and the Washington Post that Cox discusses, that may lead to WaPo moving some writers to Substack's platform. Cox worries about even more journalists being stuck in a trap they can't escape while that trap moves toward enshittification a la defunct Twitter-now-X.

The challenge may be bigger than the journalists who fled to the trap or the journalists forced into the trap by their employer.

If a big fish like Elon Musk with enough money

and fascist ideology decided to purchase Substack, it'd be bad enough that so many US journalists would be yet again working in a Nazi bar.

Worse, if the negotiations with the Washington Post are successful and WaPo moves some of its writers to a newsletter model at Substack, *WaPo itself becomes a Nazi bar client*, its employees published in a Nazi-adjacent platform.

Searches for WaPo writers' work would be discoverable right alongside Nazis' eliminationist rhetoric, legitimizing the Nazi content as on par with their work.

Nazis and the fascists who are okay with them will have co-opted one of the largest newspapers in the U.S. – a massive expansion of the Nazi bar industry.

Not mention other challenges like Substack harvesting personal data of newsletter subscribers. Adding WaPo subscribers to that data would be terrifying.

~ ~ ~

It doesn't have to be this way. There are hundreds of very smart people who are unhappy with Nazi adjacency, who could organize and create their own platform. It wouldn't take much at all.

Ask Casey Newton of Platformer who left Substack. Ask Molly White of Citation Needed who's done all the number crunching and outlined the existing alternatives to Substack.

Or look for models to other sites that have never needed Substack, sites that have their own newsletters, like Mike Masnick's Techdirt.

Or emptywheel.

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\* Edit: Moxon's site is not on Substack any longer. See his post regarding his migration to Ghost at this Techdirt link.

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**UPDATE-1 – 10:00 PM ET –**

Mike Masnick posted this on Bluesky:

Techdirt @techdirt.com

Substack's Algorithm Accidentally Reveals What We Already Knew: It's The Nazi Bar Now Back in April 2023, when Substack CEO Chris Best refused to answer basic questions about whether his platform would allow racist content, I noted that his evasiveness was essentially hanging out a "Nazis Welcome"...

Substack's Algorithm  
Accidentally Reveals What We  
Already Knew: It's The Nazi Bar  
Now

August 4, 2025 at 12:33 PM

Go read the post at Techdirt, and then consider how toxic this is to every single writer on Substack who is anti-Nazi.

Consider what it would do to WaPo's readers if WaPo actually agreed to home some of their writers at Substack.

The purpose of Substack's algorithm is what it does.

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**UPDATE-2 – 10:20 AM ET – 05-AUG-2025 –**

I knew Molly White had done a more detailed analysis of the comparative costs between newsletter services but I had forgotten I read it last year in social media and not at her site. Here's the breakdown as posted at Bluesky:

**Molly White** @molly.wiki · 7mo

Ghost or Buttdown both become the cheaper option once you hit 18 paid subscribers (assuming \$5/mo subscriptions)

6 18 147 ...

**Molly White** @molly.wiki [+ Follow](#)

Fixed an error in the chart for self-hosted Ghost at 50,000 subscribers:

Free	Substack	Ghost Pro	Self-hosted Ghost*	Beehiv	Buttdown	Mailchimp	ConvertKit
10 subscribers	\$0	\$9	\$12	\$0	\$0	\$20	\$0
50 subscribers	\$0	\$9	\$12	\$0	\$0	\$20	\$0
100 subscribers	\$0	\$9	\$12	\$0	\$0	\$20	\$0
250 subscribers	\$0	\$9	\$27	\$0	\$9	\$20	\$0
500 subscribers	\$0	\$9	\$27	\$0	\$9	\$20	\$0
1,000 subscribers	\$0	\$15	\$27	\$0	\$29	\$45	\$0
5,000 subscribers	\$0	\$65	\$27	\$69	\$79	\$100	\$0
10,000 subscribers	\$0	\$99	\$27	\$87	\$139	\$135	\$0
25,000 subscribers	\$0	\$165	\$67	\$131	\$239	\$310	\$166
50,000 subscribers	\$0	\$315	\$217	\$174	\$319	\$450	\$316
100,000 subscribers	\$0	\$565	\$412	\$262	-	\$800	\$566
7% paid @ \$5/mo	Substack	Ghost Pro	Self-hosted Ghost*	Beehiv	Buttdown	Mailchimp**	ConvertKit
10 subscribers (1 paid)	\$0.50	\$0	\$12	\$39	\$0	\$20	\$0
50 subscribers (4 paid)	\$2	\$9	\$12	\$39	\$9	\$20	\$0
100 subscribers (7 paid)	\$3.50	\$9	\$12	\$39	\$9	\$20	\$0
250 subscribers (18 paid)	\$9	\$9	\$12	\$39	\$9	\$20	\$0
500 subscribers (35 paid)	\$17.50	\$9	\$27	\$39	\$9	\$20	\$0
1,000 subscribers (70 paid)	\$35	\$15	\$27	\$39	\$29	\$45	\$0
5,000 subscribers (350 paid)	\$175	\$65	\$27	\$69	\$79	\$100	\$0
10,000 subscribers (700 paid)	\$350	\$99	\$27	\$87	\$139	\$135	\$0
25,000 subscribers (1,750 paid)	\$675	\$165	\$67	\$131	\$239	\$310	\$166
50,000 subscribers (3,500 paid)	\$1,750	\$315	\$217	\$174	\$319	\$450	\$316
100,000 subscribers (7,000 paid)	\$3,500	\$565	\$412	\$262	-	\$800	\$566

\* Assuming \$12 hosting fees, but you can get this number down lower. Assumes ~weekly email sending.  
 \*\* There may be additional fees to monetize MailChimp newsletters since it's not built-in. This also assumes ~weekly email sending.

This was excerpted from a short thread at this Bluesky link.

You can see Substack wants the big volume newsletters because they make more on them...but ask yourself what purpose the smaller volume newsletters serve if they aren't as profitable?