

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission**

**In the Matter of**

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**Protecting and Promoting the  
Open Internet**

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**GN Docket 14-28**

**Reply Comments of RebelMouse**

August 5, 2014

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## I. RebelMouse Makes it Easy to Share Ideas

RebelMouse is a technology platform that takes your best content and makes it last longer and reach farther. We aim to serve content creators of all kinds—from individual bloggers and artists to the world’s largest brand marketers and publishers—with one mission in mind: to “let your content roar.”

Our clients include General Electric (GE), United Airlines, and Viacom. *Time* named us one of their Top 50 Websites in 2013. PBS said that we were “one of the best social media tools for journalists.” *Business Insider* listed us as one of their “17 startups to bet your career on.”

Our company was founded two years ago by Paul Berry, the former CTO of the Huffington Post, and we are backed by some of the pre-eminent investors and individuals in the technology and media industries. While a significant percentage of our staff is based in New York, we take great pride in our globally distributed team, ranging in places from California and Chicago to Buenos Aires and Ukraine.

RebelMouse performs two main services. The first, the one we were founded upon, is to break down barriers to sharing content on the web. The second is to engage viewers of content. We have developed tools to aid consumption across devices and formats, to track performance across networks, to and seamlessly turn site visitors into community contributors.

In essence, we want to build you a viral content rocket ship and hand you the keys. An enterprising media mind can take a seed of an idea, leverage our platform for publishing and sharing, and potentially start competing with some of the best-known media companies in the world.

As RebelMouse matures into a full-fledged publishing platform, we have seen just how explosive the viral effects of our tools can be. One of the collaborations we’re extremely proud of is with the nascent animal activism website, The Dodo. The headline of this Fast Company

article really captures the essence of the service we offer.<sup>1</sup> It reads, “How The Dodo Hit One Million Page Views In One Month—Without Hiring A Single Developer.” After working with us, The Dodo has roughly eight million page views per month, and still operates a full editorial team without any technical experience on staff. We power their entire technology stack from end to end, freeing their team up to do what they do best: research, strategize, write, and share.

## **II. We Might Never Have Founded RebelMouse if the FCC’s Proposal Had Been Law**

RebelMouse was a direct extension of Paul’s previous experiences at the *Huffington Post*, the most viral publishing network ever created. While he was there, people began to ask him for tips, tricks, and advice about how they might also improve their visibility. After leaving the *Huffington Post*, it didn’t take long for Paul to realize that the technology that powered the *Huffington Post* could be modified to power any type of content system.

He founded RebelMouse in 2012. If there had been a fast lane then, RebelMouse would have needed to be in it. Since our servers handle lots of data and lots of traffic, any page-loading delays would have been noticeable. And our clients would not have taken kindly to these delays. First, they might have turned away from *our* site: it’s well-documented that users tend not to visit sites that load even 250 milliseconds more slowly than they expect.<sup>2</sup> Second, they might have feared that *their* data, as it gets sent from our servers, would load slowly or choppily too. We couldn’t have been a credible booster for our clients’ content if we gummed it up.

Paul would not have been able to afford to pay for prioritization on his own. In the real world, within a year of our founding, we were able to secure investments from a variety of sources. If the FCC’s proposal had been in effect, though, we might not have gotten a dime.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fastcompany.com/3027108/most-innovative-companies-2014/how-the-dodo-hit-1-million-views-in-one-month-without-hiring->

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/technology/impatient-web-users-flee-slow-loading-sites.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/technology/impatient-web-users-flee-slow-loading-sites.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

First, our investors would have realized that they would need to fund priority Internet access for us in order to keep us competitive. That would have exposed them to increased risk, which they might not have been willing to stomach. Second, given the effects of the FCC's proposal on the digital ecosystem, RebelMouse would have been a much less attractive investment. We pride ourselves on appealing to startups and small players, people who have interesting ideas but don't have a soapbox. We level the playing field for them. Within a two-tier Internet, fewer of them would exist. We would have had fewer potential clients and less potential revenue. We would have had a much less attractive pitch, and we would be a much smaller company today—if we existed at all.

### **III. The FCC's Proposal Threatens Our Company's Future**

The dangers that I just mentioned are still live. The FCC's proposal will parch the Internet ecosystem, constricting our revenues. It will also force us to pay whatever we must to put ourselves in the fast lane, and to negotiate individual deals with multiple ISPs. That is time and money that we could have spent on hiring, innovation, and growth.

We also face the threat of exclusive deals, hammered out between our competitors and ISPs, giving them and them alone the right to a fast lane. We could not afford to purchase such a right, which undoubtedly would be very expensive. If any of our competitors bought the exclusive right to a fast lane, we might have to go out of business.

### **IV. We Do Not Have an Army of Lawyers to Negotiate With or Sue ISPs**

A vague "commercial reasonableness" standard does not defend us. We have no telecommunications lawyers on staff (we have one lawyer period), and we have virtually no budget for legal actions. Anything less than a bright line rule would not help us because we just

don't have the resources to battle over presumptions. We need bright-line rules against blocking, technical discrimination, and paid prioritization.

## **V. Conclusion**

We urge the FCC to reclassify broadband providers under Title II of the Communications Act, and to enact bright-line rules which prohibit blocking, technical discrimination, and paid prioritization.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Jason Gelman

Jason Gelman

Sr. Manager, Business Operations