

TikTok alternatives arise: Zigazoo founder looks to build the ‘Whole Foods’ of social media

Article

The news: Zigazoo has launched a **Gen Z-focused platform**, backed by investors including **Charli D’Amelio** and **Serena Williams**. The video-first app is intended for Gen Zers ages 13 to

20, and was spun off from the Gen Alpha-focused Zigazoo app, renamed **Zigazoo Kids**.

Why it matters: The potential **TikTok** ban is a catalyst for further fragmentation of the social landscape. Zigazoo is one in what is likely a sea of new apps that will emerge to capture the attention of social users should TikTok be banned.

- CEO and founder **Zak Ringelstein** wants Zigazoo to be a mainstream healthier alternative to social media, akin to **Whole Foods** among supermarket chains.

“We’re not going to be in a world where social media doesn’t exist,” says Ringelstein. “But we need to come up with something that is healthier, safer, and protects adolescents from toxicity, bullying, and too much screen time.”

Yes, but: TikTok, **Instagram**, **Facebook**, and others didn’t begin as “toxic” platforms. Ringelstein acknowledged that and said Zigazoo has put several safeguards in place to protect its users and create accountability. That includes a ban on text comments, user authentication, and a transparent algorithm that uses reputation scores and friend graphs to decide how content is surfaced.

“People say terrible things in comments they would never say in real life,” says Ringelstein. “Think of Zigazoo as TikTok meets **Reddit**, where everything is a video-reaction thread.”

Monetization plans: Brands can currently get involved by hosting their own paid challenges and creating content for Zigazoo. Many of the upcoming monetization strategies Ringelstein pointed to are in line with what we predicted new social apps would take this year in our [2023 Social Media Trends to Watch](#) report.

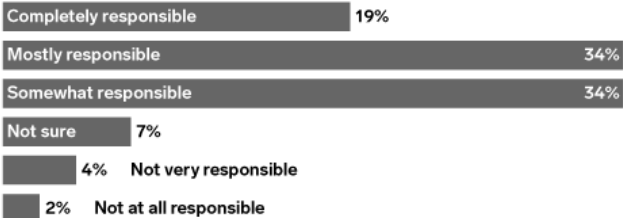
- In-app purchases: Users can buy Zigabucks, which are used to purchase virtual goods and experiences as well as gift others within the app.
- Subscriptions: Ringelstein says Zigazoo will be launching a subscription model around its Zigabucks offering in Q2, which could include the ability to purchase avatars for profiles.
- Creator monetization: Equity and exclusivity are the primary incentives for creators to join the platform right now, but Ringelstein says Zigazoo is working on a broader “creator pay” model and is interested in “tipping and a creator marketplace.”

The big picture: Not every new social app is going to be worth marketers’ attention, but Zigazoo makes a strong case for brands looking to reach younger generations in a safe

environment. Zigazoo still needs to scale its user base and develop a competitive monetization strategy for both brands and creators in order to create real staying power.

US Adults Who Think That Social Media Is Responsible for the Increase in Depression Among US Teens, Feb 2023

% of respondents



Source: YouGov as cited in company blog, March 11, 2023

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