

How to be small and make money online

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How can a tiny independent journalistic enterprise like [Rick Waghorn's](#) Norwich City FC News site make money when it comes up against the big boys like the BBC? We are all familiar with the [Long Tail](#) theory, but can that really sustain small news businesses? Tonight at [POLIS](#) we had another of our *Future of News* seminars with about 20 of the nation's more interesting new media entrepreneurs, consultants and commentators. Somehow, the evening's early fears about how the giants like Reuters and the BBC might kill off the little guys turned in to a party celebrating the possible. The key concept is of course networking. Network for advertising. Network for an audience. The pence per hit or referral may be small but the numbers accumulate. Rick Waghorn has secured his niche and he has good ideas for turning it into something bigger. At one point we had a [Dragon's Den](#) scenario where I thought people were going to start writing cheques. But the more interesting approval came from [BBC Online](#) Editor Steve Herrmann and Reuter's [Astrid Zweynert](#) who (not literally) embraced the little guys of online journalism. Steve Herrmann was even kind enough to describe people like Waghorn as 'a threat'. Steve and Astrid said that they recognise that Big Media is going to become increasingly dependent on input from the network of freelancers and small journalist businesses that are springing up online. As Steve put it, BBC journalists will have to realise that on any given story, there are a load of people out there who know more about it than the BBC journalist involved. But the proof of the digital pudding comes in paying up. Reuters has done deals with global bloggers but it isn't going to give them a living wage. And if independent journalists want to survive they are going to have to get in bed with search engines like Google and advertising agencies such as [Adify](#) whose UK Head of business development, Rob Proctor, made a strong case for their ability to 'vertically' network small companies and individual bloggers. I guess there's no such thing as a truly independent journalist and perhaps there never was. But at least the internet has made it cheaper and easier to try. More on tonight's session over the next few days – if you want to come to POLIS events, contact us at polis@lse.ac.uk.

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