



Online whistleblower platforms: **protecting** the source

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DONATE

Late night parking garage meetings, brown envelopes and burner phones. These were one of the few safe and anonymous ways for whistleblowers to share information. Nowadays, thanks to technological advancements, whistleblowers can also use online platforms to share information with investigative reporters.

By: Ilayda Hagens

A chat with the expert

In light of International Whistleblower Day I spoke with Marcel Oomens. As a Project Officer at Free Press Unlimited and expert on the subject, he was involved in implementing online whistleblower platforms such as: [Publeaks](#) in the Netherlands, [Mexicoleaks](#) in Mexico, [Indonesialeaks](#) in Indonesia and [Leaks.NG](#) in Nigeria. These platforms connect whistleblowers with the media which will increase investigative reporting and improve accountability of governments and businesses.

What makes someone a whistleblower?

“Anybody who gets a sense of wrongdoing in their organisation and takes action to do something about the issue. This means that somebody who reports a misconduct or issue about their direct line manager to a Human Resource Manager for example is also a whistleblower. Matter of fact in most cases the whistle is first blown internally. But when that person feels that the issue is not being heard within the organisation, external institutions or authorities can be alarmed. And those are the whistleblowers we as the public often hear about.”

When should someone use an online whistleblower platform?

“A step further than going beyond the borders of the organisation is sharing the issue in the media. When a whistleblower feels like the information is in the public interest they can use these whistleblower platforms. This allows whistleblowers to anonymously share their findings and

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documents with investigative reporters. Which means sources can be better protected and those sources will hopefully feel more comfortable to share important information.”

What is the role of the media in this process?

“At Free Press Unlimited we consciously run these whistleblower platforms together with media organisations. We believe that professional investigative reporters have an important role to play in exposing secret documents in the public domain. Journalists have been trained to assess documents and information regarding its importance for the public. So these platforms like Publeaks or Mexicoleaks don’t store, analyse or decide what reaches the public. These platforms don’t even have access to these documents. The reporters do, and we expect them to make the right decision about what and what not to share with the rest of the world.”

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