

Kutcher invests in flat fee tech startup Dwolla

April 11 2012

(AP) -- Actor Ashton Kutcher is among the early investors in Dwolla, an Iowa tech startup that lets users transfer money or pay for things through their smartphones or online for a flat fee of 25 cents per transaction.

The "Two and a Half Men" star didn't disclose the size of the investment his venture capital [company](#) made in Dwolla, which is hoping to lure customers seeking an alternative to the percentage-based fees typical of credit card purchases and other online payment methods.

Kutcher told The Des Moines Register on Tuesday that he wants to help build a "killer" company in Iowa "and put a bunch of people to work here."

"I think this company could employ hundreds of people within the next couple of years," he said. "The potential for Dwolla is to be the backbone for the global financial exchange. Because it's built to do that. It's built better than any system that currently exists."

Dwolla said in February that it had raised \$5 million from five investment firms, but it kept Kutcher's involvement secret until now.

Kutcher's company, A-Grade Investments, has invested in about 40 [tech startups](#) and [tech](#) companies, including popular services such as Foursquare, Zaarly and Skype. The Cedar Rapids native, who provided feedback to Dwolla's 20 employees at its downtown headquarters on Monday, said he sees the company having a huge impact.

Dwolla's founder, Ben Milne, said he talks with Kutcher via Skype every month or so. Milne says Kutcher's insights have "shown up in the product already in a million different ways."

Their relationship began when Bo Fishback, CEO of the digital marketplace Zaarly, told Kutcher he should meet Milne. They got together at Thanksgiving last year at Kutcher's brother's house and his father's garage, he said.

The two drew up ideas on whiteboards. Kutcher said he was impressed with Milne's vision.

Kutcher has won a reputation as a savvy tech investor and social media star, and entrepreneurs across the country compete to get time with him.

It's not just because of a fat paycheck. He has launched his own app and a social media production company and he brings a huge audience to any new company he chooses to invest in and talk about. He has more than 10 million followers on his Twitter account and 12.2 million "likes" on Facebook.

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Citation: Kutcher invests in flat fee tech startup Dwolla (2012, April 11) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-kutcher-invests-flat-fee-tech.html>

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