

# AOL trims its Patch news operations (Update)

August 16 2013

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The AOL logo is posted on a sign in front of the AOL Inc. offices on February 7, 2011 in Palo Alto, California. AOL said Friday it was cutting an unspecified number of jobs at its Patch hyperlocal news operations, while consolidating or closing some Patch sites.

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Media reports said the cuts could affect as many as 500 people, or 40 percent of the staff.

AOL did not confirm any numbers, saying only it "will be reducing a substantial number of Patch positions."

"Patch, as previously announced, is taking steps to move to profitability," an AOL spokesperson said in a statement.

"Patch's strategy will be to focus resources against core sites and partner in towns that need additional resources. Additionally, there are sites that we will be consolidating or closing."

The company was founded in 2007 by Tim Armstrong, who is current AOL's chief executive, and two others. Patch was acquired by AOL in 2009.

The move into Patch was part of AOL's effort to reposition itself as a digital media company after losing its market as an Internet service provider. AOL has also acquired news sites such as the Huffington Post and TechCrunch.

A media blog by Jim Romanesko said the Patch cuts affected 480 staff positions.

"He said 60 percent of the Patch sites will continue, 20 percent of them will partner with other outlets, and 20 percent will be consolidated or completely closed," said Romanesko.

Armstrong briefed the Patch staff last week on changes to come, and fired Patch creative director Abel Lenz in a meeting whose audio was widely circulated on the Internet.

Armstrong was apparently peeved that Lenz was filming the session.

"Abel, put that camera down right now! Abel, you're fired. Out!,"  
Armstrong was heard saying.

Earlier this year, EveryBlock, a hyperlocal website built on the promise of drawing customers with neighborhood-based news, also was shuttered.

Patch has been one of the more prominent remaining hyperlocal operations, but several small websites still operate across the United States.

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