

After big expansion, Vice Media retrenches

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Vice Media, the fast-growing online group that raised hundreds of millions of dollars as it expanded its no-holds-barred news operation, has begun retrenching.

The New York-based media group has served layoff notices to a number of [employees](#), said Jason Gordon of the Writers Guild of America-East, which has been representing Vice employees since April.

"We are aware that WGA members will be affected and they will be receiving the severance package that we negotiated in April," Gordon told AFP Tuesday.

Gordon did not indicate how many Vice employees were being terminated but the news website Politico said 15 Vice News digital producers, writers and editors were to be laid off in New York and Los Angeles.

CNN meanwhile reported Vice was cutting at least a dozen US-based employees to unify the Vice News television and digital platforms, along with three based in Britain.

One of those based in London, Harriet Salem, tweeted her own layoff, saying: "All of UK @vicenews editorial team, plus the only two foreign correspondents laid off just now (including me). Massive US layoffs too."

Vice did not respond to an AFP query.

The company has raised more than \$500 million including \$200 million from Disney to help launch a Vice television channel.

Other investors in Vice include the Murdoch family's 21st Century Fox, A&E and the Technology Crossover Venture fund.

Known for its online videos, Vice operates a popular YouTube channel and also produces news programming for Time Warner's HBO.

In France, it produces a daily news segment for France 4 television.

At the time of latest fund-raising round, Vice boosted its valuation to more than \$2.5 billion, or more than that of the New York Times, as it cultivated a bad-boy image and gained a strong following among the 18-to 34-year-old demographic.

It was founded in Canada as a print magazine by Suroosh Alvi, described in some reports as a recovering heroin addict, and Shane Smith, whose numerous tattoos give him the look of a biker gang member.

Vice gained notoriety for sending former NBA star Dennis Rodman to North Korea. It also won praise for a five-part documentary on the inner workings of the Islamic State group.

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