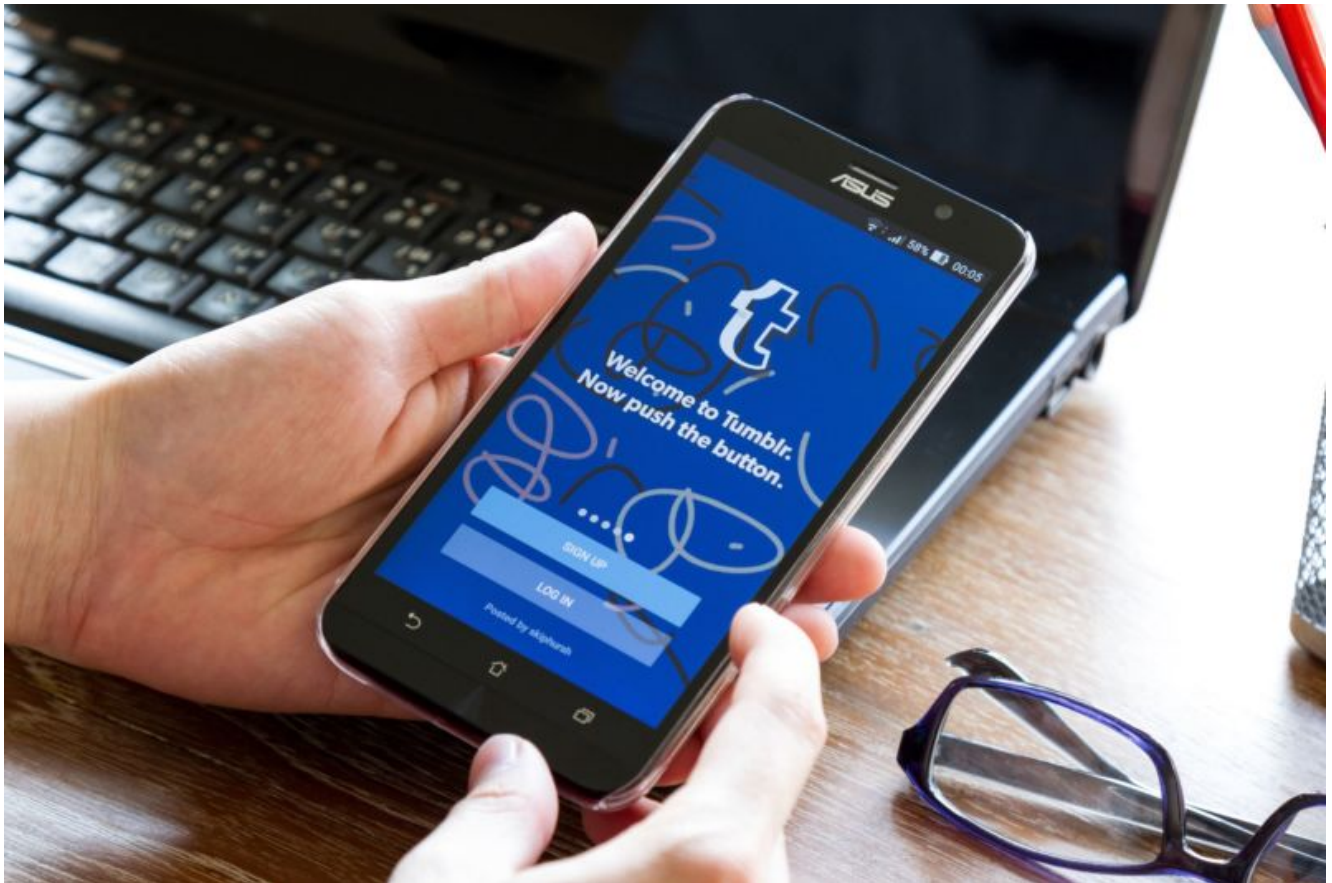


Verizon selling Tumblr to WordPress.com owner, but porn ban won't go away



Enlarge / The Tumblr application on an Asus Zenfone 2.

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Verizon has agreed to sell Tumblr to Automattic Inc., the owner of WordPress.com, Verizon announced today.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. In addition to Tumblr, Automattic will "take on about 200 staffers" from Verizon, The Wall Street Journal reported. The Verizon-imposed porn ban will stay in place at Tumblr after the deal is completed, the

Journal wrote.

It's not clear when the deal will be completed. The companies' announcement said the deal is "subject to customary closing conditions."

"Tumblr is one of the Web's most iconic brands," Automattic CEO Matt Mullenweg said in the announcement. "It is an essential venue to share new ideas, cultures, and experiences, helping millions create and build communities around their shared interests. We are excited to add it to our lineup, which already includes WordPress.com, WooCommerce, Jetpack, Simplenote, Longreads, and more."

Verizon Media CEO Guru Gowrappan called Automattic "the perfect partner" for Tumblr, saying that the buyer's "expertise and track record will unlock new and exciting possibilities for Tumblr and its users." WordPress.com is a blogging and website-building platform based on the open source WordPress software.

Yahoo bought Tumblr for \$1.1 billion in 2013. Verizon bought Yahoo's operating business, including Tumblr, for \$4.48 billion in June 2017.

Verizon's moves into the media business haven't gone so well. In January, Verizon laid off 7% of the 11,385 employees in its media division, which includes Yahoo and AOL. That came weeks after Verizon told the Securities and Exchange Commission that its media business had "lower-than-expected revenues and earnings" and "lower-than-expected benefits from the integration of the Yahoo Inc. and AOL Inc. businesses."

In May this year, after Verizon started seeking buyers for Tumblr, Pornhub said it wanted to buy Tumblr and end the site's Verizon-imposed porn ban. Automattic will reportedly keep the ban in place.

"Mr. Mullenweg said his company intends to maintain the

existing policy that bans adult content,” today’s Journal article said. “He said he has long been a Tumblr user and sees the site as complementary to WordPress.com. ‘It’s just fun,’ he said of Tumblr. ‘We’re not going to change any of that.’”

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