

The lessons of Squash, the first automated fact-checking platform | Poynter

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Squash began as a crazy dream.

Soon after I started PolitiFact in 2007, readers began suggesting a cool but far-fetched idea. They wanted to see our fact checks pop up on live TV.

That kind of automated fact-checking wasn't possible with the technology available back then, but I liked the idea so much that I hacked together a PowerPoint of how it might look. It showed a guy watching a campaign ad when PolitiFact's Truth-O-Meter suddenly popped up to indicate the ad was false.

It took 12 years, but our team in the Duke University Reporters' Lab managed to make the dream come true. Today, Squash (our code name for the project, chosen because it is a nutritious vegetable and a good metaphor for stopping falsehoods) has been a remarkable success. It displays fact checks seconds after politicians utter a claim and it largely does what those readers wanted in 2007.

[...]

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