

## Crisis Text Line Raises \$23.8 Million

Funds were granted by tech powerhouses Reid Hoffman, Melinda Gates, The Ballmer Group, and Omidyar Network

**NEW YORK, June 16, 2016** – Crisis Text Line, the free, 24/7 support line for people in crisis via text, today at Wired Business Conference announced it has raised \$23.8 million from tech titans Reid Hoffman, Melinda Gates, The Ballmer Group, and Omidyar Network. Following the lead of tech startups, the not-for-profit has created an innovative way to fundraise, securing funds in the style of a Series B Round investment.

"There is no equity; no possibility of a liquidity moment. Crisis Text Line is a tech startup, so it makes sense for us to fundraise like one," said **Nancy Lublin, Founder and CEO of Crisis Text Line**. "The amount raised and the caliber of the people we attracted underscore the quality of what we're doing."

"Like other tech start ups, Crisis Text Line has demonstrated accelerating growth, and this funding will enable it to scale rapidly to deliver its critical services to many more in need," said **Reid Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn and tech investor**.

The round was led by Hoffman, followed by Melinda Gates, The Ballmer Group and Omidyar Network. Additional funds were granted by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Craig Newmark (founder of craigslist and craigconnects), Mark & Ali Pincus, Anne Devereux-Mills, Joe & Suzy Edelman, Amy & Rob Stavis, and an anonymous donor.

"Crisis Text Line is shaping a new understanding of mental illness in our country by helping people where they are: on their mobile phones," said **Shripriya Mahesh, partner, Omidyar Network**. "We are impressed by the organization's impact so far and excited to renew our commitment to its growth, so it can continue to connect with people at the times they need it the most."

While the funds raised are unrestricted, Lublin notes the focus on three main initiatives:

### Community

- Crisis Text Line has a community of over 1,500 volunteer Crisis Counselors. In the next two years, the org plans to grow to more than 4,000 Crisis Counselors.
- The organization plans to hire more developers to build smart products and programs to support their Crisis Counselor community.

### Messaging apps

- **YouTube** is Crisis Text Line's earliest tech partner and has worked over the past year to provide support to users searching for self harm, suicide and depression related content through the innovative use of YouTube's Crisis One Box. The

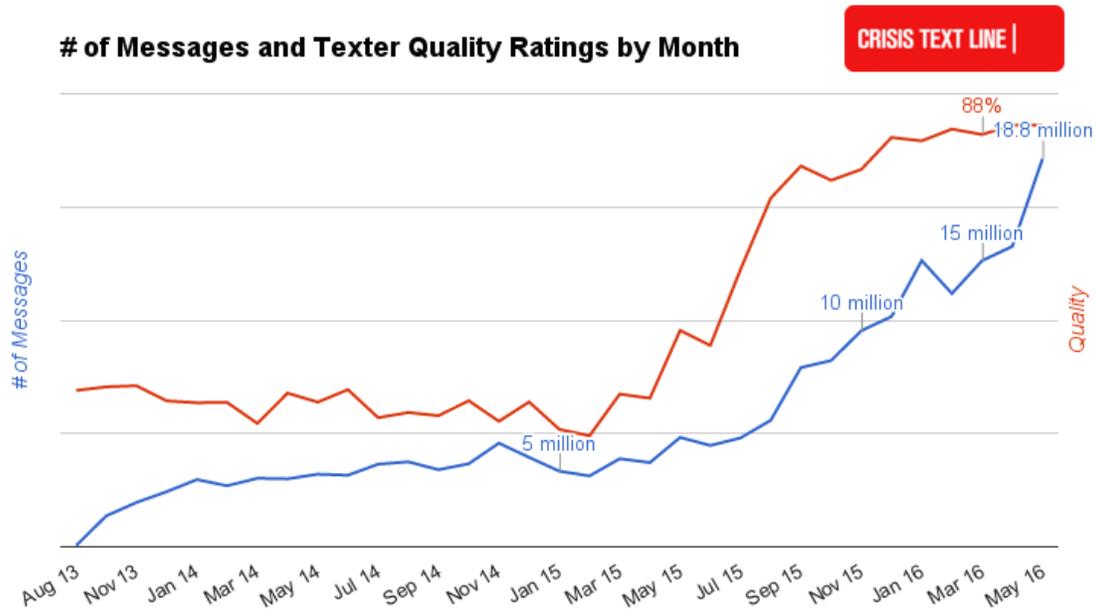
partnership has had profound impact and since implementing the Crisis One Box it has saved numerous lives. "Crisis response is a priority for us at YouTube, and we couldn't be happier with our partnership with Crisis Text Line. Thanks to our collective work, YouTube's Crisis One Box is saving lives. We hope to continue creating important resources for people in need," said **Julia Paige, Director YouTube for Good**.

- The organization has been working with popular teen app **After School** for the past six months to provide a direct link in the app to 24/7 crisis support with Crisis Text Line.
- Today at the Wired Business Conference in New York City, Crisis Text Line announced its partnership with **Facebook Messenger** to support users in crisis both through the safety checkpoint and the Messenger API, and also a pilot program with **Kik** to help support users in the popular teen chat app.

### **White label**

- Crisis Text Line has piloted a tailored solution allowing other organizations and locations to benefit from its technology platform. Partners have access to data trends specific to their population. "Crisis Text Line is an innovative addition to our programs to help teens and families at risk. It is important at a time of crisis that people receive help quickly and effectively," said **Ras Baraka, Mayor of Newark, New Jersey**, where "Text NEW to 741741" was recently launched.
- Instead of creating their own text line, the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) partnered with Crisis Text Line to offer "Text NEDA to 741741." "Our partnership with Crisis Text Line has been a truly collaborative process. Crisis Text Line worked with NEDA to develop a comprehensive training on eating disorders, which gives us confidence that people who struggle with these life-threatening illnesses are receiving quality support in the moment when they need it most," said **Claire Mysko, CEO of the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)**.

Crisis Text Line has exchanged over 18.8 million messages since its launch in August 2013. The organization is proud to note that this growth has not resulted in a decline in quality. In fact, the data shows quality improving in lock-step with volume.



“Crisis Text Line is a powerful way to reach young people in need using a technology they know and trust. I am inspired by Nancy’s deep understanding of the power of connection, and her track record shows that she knows how to turn a simple text message into an instrument that can transform lives,” said **Melinda Gates**.

Crisis Text Line’s service skews young, rural, and low-income. The org’s real-time surveying of texters shows that:

- 80% of Crisis Text Line texters report being under the age of 25.
- 6% of Crisis Text Line texters say they are Native American and 14% Hispanic
- 19% of Crisis Text Line texting volume comes from the 10% lowest-income zip codes

The data that has been collected and analyzed is a huge secondary benefit of Crisis Text Line. The organization uses natural language processing and machine learning to make its service faster and more accurate. For example, conversations are triaged based on severity, instead of being handled in chronological order.

Aggregate data is being shared publicly on [crisistrends.org](http://crisistrends.org), in hopes of inspiring system change and reducing stigma. And the organization has even opened up enclave data by application only, for non-commercial research.

“This data set has the volume, velocity, and variety to inspire really exciting research and policy,” added **Lublin**. “You can’t fix something if you don’t understand what is broken.”

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### **About Crisis Text Line**

Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 support for people in crisis via text.

[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

### **About The Ballmer Group**

The Ballmer Group supports projects and organizations dedicated to improving outcomes for children and families in need and focuses on reducing intergenerational poverty in the United States. They advance these efforts through grant making, investing in system reform, and collaborating with public and private sector partners. They have supported projects to strengthen public schools, advance gun safety legislation, empower providers of social and health services, improve child welfare outcomes, and reconnect students and young adults with education and job training opportunities. The Ballmer Group is co-chaired by philanthropist and civic activist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft and owner of the LA Clippers.

### **About Omidyar Network**

Omidyar Network is a philanthropic investment firm dedicated to harnessing the power of markets to create opportunity for people to improve their lives. Established in 2004 by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar and his wife Pam, the organization invests in and helps scale innovative organizations to catalyze economic and social change. Omidyar Network has committed more than \$969 million to for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations that foster economic advancement and encourage individual participation across multiple initiatives, including Consumer Internet & Mobile, Education, Financial Inclusion, Governance & Citizen Engagement, and Property Rights. To learn more, visit [www.omidyar.com](http://www.omidyar.com), and follow on Twitter @omidyarnetwork #PositiveReturns.

### **About Melinda Gates**

Philanthropist Melinda Gates has dedicated her life to achieving transformational improvements in the health and prosperity of families, communities and societies. Core to her work is empowering women and girls to help them realize their full potential. As Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is guided by the belief that every life has equal value, Melinda shapes and approves strategies, reviews results, and sets the overall direction of the world's largest private foundation. Melinda recently launched an executive office, Pivotal Ventures, which enables her to bring together the different strands of her advocacy and philanthropic work and create meaningful change. Melinda received a bachelor's degree from Duke and an MBA from Duke's Fuqua School. After joining Microsoft Corp. in 1987, she helped develop many of the company's multimedia products. In 1996, Melinda left Microsoft to focus on her philanthropic work and family.

### **About Reid Hoffman**

An accomplished entrepreneur, executive, and investor, Reid Hoffman has played an integral role in building many of today's leading consumer technology businesses. In 2003 he co-founded LinkedIn, the world's largest professional networking service. In 2009 he joined Greylock Partners. He currently serves on the boards of Airbnb, Edmodo, Xapo, LinkedIn, and a few early stage companies still in stealth. In addition, he serves on a number of not-for-profit boards, including Kiva, Mozilla Corporation, Endeavor, and Do Something. He is the co-author of two New York Times best-selling books: *The Start-Up of You* and *The Alliance*. His next book is focused on "blitzscaling", based on his Stanford course of the same name. He is an Aspen Institute Crown Fellow, a Marshall Scholar at Oxford, and a graduate of Stanford University.

#### **About John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. For more, visit [www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org).

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