

What Google Might Do to Be Really Evil/ Good ↩ (View post)

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2 years ago • 1,700 views

History has taught us that efficiency not evilness is what we should be afraid of, especially when dealing with a “very polite, consensus-driven company”.

[mattcutts.com/blog/the-real-le ...](http://mattcutts.com/blog/the-real-le...)

Such organizations may find it hard to distinguish “mistakes” from “wrongs”


You raise an excellent point about the capacity of Google, or any corporation for that matter, to do evil. While Google's image is now all sunshine, rainbows and lavalamps, the world can be a mean and unpredictable place, and bad things can happen to even the most well-intentioned and morally righteous public companies, especially when there's billions of dollars at stake. Google may not "do" evil per se, but the company could be unknowingly contaminated or attacked by evil forces which could result in negative consequences for Google users (if not the world in general). God forbid these situations ever materialize, but here's some ways Google could be complicit, however unwittingly, to evil:

If information is power and Google has all (or most of) the information, that makes Google extraordinarily powerful, almost quasi-governmental. To use another cliché, if absolute power corrupts absolutely, Google might be somehow corrupted. Example: a rogue Google employee – say, a new employee who resents that his stock options are worth far less than other Google employees who joined the firm earlier – could access search, e-mail or document records. In the course of his research, he discovers compromising information about particular users. The rogue employee then anonymously approaches the users with this information and requests payment of some sort. If the user fails to comply, the rogue employee would leak or accidentally expose the information.

Google could be the victim of political or corporate espionage or sabotage. It's not unreasonable to assume that numerous governments around the world (US? UK? Russia? China? Iran? Israel?) and leading multinationals already have spies or moles embedded undercover in Google. Some of the agents may be benign, but some may have agendas either bad or good depending on your perspective. Chinese agents, for example, could scan through Gmail and Google Docs and Spreadsheets to look for dissident activity. American agents could be looking for evidence of terrorist cells and operations.

Google could be victim of blackmail or extortion. Scenario: criminals threaten a Google employee and demand access to part or all of Google's search or email records. As part of the deal, the Google employee must remain quiet, not alert police, and not even notify other Google workers. Part or all of Google's search or document records could be exposed and only the victim and the criminals would know.

What if your Google search and email and online documents records were accidentally made public? That would be bad enough, but what if you discovered that the records had been deliberately altered to indicate that you conducted searches or collected information on subjects that you in fact did not? What if your records were accidentally or deliberately switched or merged with the search records of a known terrorist, pedophile or other criminal? Who's to say what are your "real" search records or online documents?

Philipp Lenssen 

2 years ago #

Some very interesting points you raise there.
