

Ethics paper (google)

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Individual PaperGoogle: The Quest to Balance Privacy with Profits Amanda Green MGT 308 Professor Vidal March 19, 2013 Background Since its birth over a decade ago, Google has been on the cutting edge of internet technological innovation, and more recently, consumer electronics and productivity tools. Many faithful Google users praise the company for the ease of use of their products, and for the number of free virtual products the company offers (Google. com, Google+, Gmail, Google Docs, Chrome, Youtube etc...).

In order for Google to offer a variety of “ free” virtual products, they must sell ad space to other companies to be featured within Google products, such as their free search engine Google. com. In 2000, Google introduced a new way to capitalize on its advertising revenues by using a different way of selling ad space, AdWords. With this method of advertising, companies only pay when a user actually clicks on theiradvertisement. The users’ searches can also be tracked and advertisements related to the search words will be displayed to the user.

Methods like this are both profitable for the company and for Google because it allows the ads to better reach the target audience. Although from a corporate point of view this method seems ideal, some users have taken a great concern with how their personal internet patterns are being used to Google’s advantage, thus causing a user privacy conflict. Although some users are comfortable with this method, in the past few years, Google’s privacy policy issue has been placed under an ethical spotlight, and the company continues to face many challenges not only with consumers, but also with government regulations.

Great Power; Greater Responsibility? Being one of the most valuable brands in the world, Google has an inherent responsibility to use their power to improve the lives of their many stake holders. These stake holders include employees, investors, advertisers, and most importantly their consumers. Because of their unique work environment, Google employees seem to be a pleased stakeholder group. Google has gone above and beyond many companies to create an unmatched work environment and benefits for their employees.

With many perks such as a massage every other week, free gourmet lunches, an outdoor volleyball court, roller hockey, tuition reimbursement, bring your pet to work, and discounts on solar panels, it is obvious that Google is a place anyone would aspire to work at. But a happy employee does not necessarily mean a happy consumer. Google profits from user satisfaction and loyalty to their services and products. Recently this user satisfaction has been over shadowed by user doubt and concern. In fact, 52 percent of Google users have some concerns about their privacy on the site.

The user privacy policy Google currently has in place is thought, by many users, to be confusing and is often times over looked. This privacy statement explains to users that their personal information is tracked and collected by Google. On the other hand, some consumers feel that use of their personal information is a small price to pay in exchange for using their superior services. Perhaps, in the case of their customer stakeholders, Google needs to look at the privacy issue from an ethical point of view rather than a profitable point of view.

Google should go above and beyond to insure consumer privacy and understanding, rather than using a passive method. Given their large amount of resources it seems reasonable that Google should create a privacy policy that all of its users can fully understand. An increased corporate transparency will create more trust and loyalty in Google and their products and services. If the users are happy then a domino effect will be created and advertisers will keep and strong faith and trust in Google, as will their investors.

The Balance between Consumer Privacy and Corporate Profitability Due to a rapidly developing technological world, many tech companies are being faced with issues concerning consumer privacy and safety. With every advance in technology there comes a risk. In Google's case, they have been able to collect consumer information, most of the time without the consumers' knowledge, and use it to their advantage in selling ad space to advertisers. Google holds strong that this information is kept confidential and over time becomes anonymous.

Although Google does take its users privacy seriously, some users still think it is unethical for Google to use their personal information and internet browsing habits for profit. Perhaps, one of the best ways Google could work to create a balance between privacy and profit is to allow users easy access to the information that Google has collected about them. This way users could know exactly what information is being used by Google for advertisement profits.

If a consumer is uncomfortable with this, they could opt out of using Google's services. Google could also provide a service in which consumers could pay a

low monthly fee to insure that their personal information and internet activity is not tracked or collected by Google. In any situation, Google should continue to contribute large amounts of their resources to security innovation, in order to insure that users' personal information is kept safe from computer hackers. Effects of Government Internet Privacy Regulation

As Google experienced in China, government regulations can be detrimental to not only their profits, but a contradiction to Google's key principles. When Google was forced by the Chinese government to censor certain internet sites, Google felt this was against their key principles. So in 2012 Google decided to provide a warning for users when a search term might encounter censorship. The Chinese government did not approve of this, so Google moved on to Hong Kong and lost their major market share of Chinese internet users.

The Third Party Doctrine and the United States Patriot Act is a governmental issue that has caused weariness for users. Under the Patriot Act, the U. S. government could, by law, subpoena the personal information Google has collected about its users, even though Google assures its users that their information is kept confidential. Other governmental policies Google is facing are privacy audits done by the FTC. These audits could actually prove to be a positive opportunity for Google to improve on their privacy controls and regain faith of their users.

In order for Google to comply with new and future government regulations, they must be flexible and find ways to insure user privacy and safety before it becomes an issue, as it has in the past couple of years. Conclusion: Although Google has been under an ethical spot light in recent years, they

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should continue to use their innovative resources to provide consumers with cutting edge services and products. The privacy policy changes they should make will challenge the ways they have been conducting business the past two decades.

However, it will be essential that Google takes ethical steps to regain faith, trust and loyalty of their consumers. In the rapidly changing world of technology, Google will need to find ethical ways to be ahead of the game, rather than bending and pushing the internet privacy rules. References Sawayda J. (2012). Google: The Quest to Balance Privacy with Profits. Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative. Retrieved from <http://danielsethics.mgt.unm.edu/>