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Thoughts from a code-wielding applied mathematician

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I Used To Want To Work For Google

A long time ago I thought Google was this magical company that truly cared about engineering and solving problems instead of maximizing shareholder value. Then Larry Page became CEO and [I realized they were not a magical unicorn](#) and lamented the fact that they had been transformed into "just another large company". Several important things happened between that post and now: Microsoft got a new CEO, so I decided to give them a shot and got hired there. I quit right before Windows 10 came out because I knew it was going to be a disaster. More recently, it's become apparent that Google had gone far past simply being a behemoth unconcerned with the cries of the helpless and transformed into something outright malevolent. It's [silenced multiple reporters](#), [blocked windows phone from accessing youtube out of spite](#), and [successfully gotten an entire group of researchers fired by threatening to pull funding \(but that didn't stop them\)](#).

This is **evil**. This is *horrifying*. This is the kind of stuff Microsoft did in the 90s that made everyone hate it so much they still have to fight against the repercussions of decisions made two decades ago because of the sheer amount of damage they did and lives they ruined. I'm at the point where I'd rather go back to Microsoft, whose primary sin at this point is mostly just being incompetent instead of outright evil, rather than Google, who is actually doing things that are fundamentally morally wrong. These are the kinds of decisions that are bald-faced abuses of power, without any possible "good intention" driving them. It's **vile**. There is no excuse.

As an ex-Microsoft employee, I can assure you that at no point did I think Microsoft was doing something *evil* while I was there. I haven't seen Microsoft do anything outright *evil* since I left, either. The few times they came close they backed off and apologized later. Microsoft didn't piss people off by being evil, it pissed people off by being *dumb*. I was approached by a Google recruiter shortly after I left and I briefly considered going to Google because I considered them vastly more competent, and I still do. However, no amount of engineering competency can make me want to work for a company that actively does things I consider morally reprehensible. This is the same reason I will never work for Facebook. I've drawn a line in the sand, and I find myself in the surprising situation of being on the opposite side of Google, and discovering that *Microsoft*, of all companies, isn't with them.

I always thought I'd be able to mostly disregard the questionable things that Google and Microsoft were doing and compare them purely on the competency of their engineers. However, it seems that Google has every intention of driving me away by doing things so utterly disgusting I could *never* work there and still be able to sleep at night. This worries me deeply, because as these companies get larger and larger, they eat up all the other sources of employment. Working at a startup that isn't one of the big 5 won't help if it gets bought out next month. One friend of mine with whom I shared many horror stories with worked at LinkedIn. He was not happy when he woke up one day to discover he now worked for the very company he had heard me complaining about. Even now, he's thinking of quitting, and not because Microsoft is evil - they're just so goddamn *dumb*.

The problem is that there aren't many other options, short of starting your own company. Google is evil, Facebook is evil, Apple is evil if you care about open hardware, Microsoft is too stupid to be evil but might at some point become evil again, and Amazon is probably evil and may or may not treat it's employees like shit depending on who you ask. Even if you don't work directly for them, you're probably using their products or services. At some point, you have to put food on the table. This is why I generally refuse to blame someone for working for an evil company because the economy punishes you for trying to stand up for your morals. It's not the workers fault, here, it's Wall Street incentivizing rotten behavior by rewarding short-term profits instead of long-term growth. A free market optimizes to a monopoly. Monopolies are bad. I don't know what people don't get about this. We're fighting over stupid shit like transgender troops or gay rights instead of just treating other human beings with decency, all the while letting rich people rob us blind as they decimate the economy. This is stupid. I would daresay it's almost more stupid than the guy at Microsoft who decided to fire all the testers.

But I guess I'll take unrelenting stupidity over **retaliating against researchers for criticizing you**. At least until Microsoft remembers how to be evil. Then I don't know what I'll do.

I don't know what anyone will do.

Posted by Erik McClure at