

What Google doesn't want you to know?

There's a major conflict of interest at the heart of Google's business model—one that Google has exploited from the beginning.

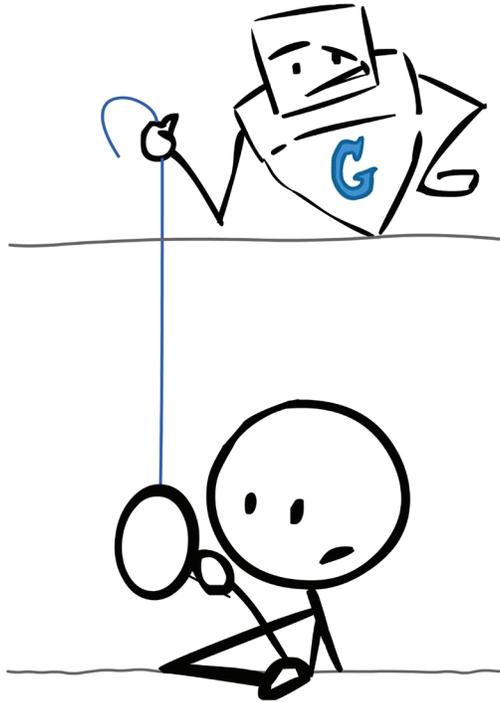
When founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin were students at Stanford, they wrote their thesis about search engines. They said: "Advertising-funded search engines will be inherently biased towards the advertisers and away from the needs of the consumers."

They called search engine bias "particularly insidious."

But now Google is a search engine that made over \$36 billion in sales in 2011 by catering to advertisers.

Now that's **good to know.**

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How does Google stay on top?

The top three search results get 88% of clicks. Google knows this. Search for a flight, and Google Flight Search is first. Search for a restaurant review, and there's Google Places. And with Google's recent "social" update, search for *anything*, and find Google+ results up top, yet Twitter and Facebook are nowhere to be found.

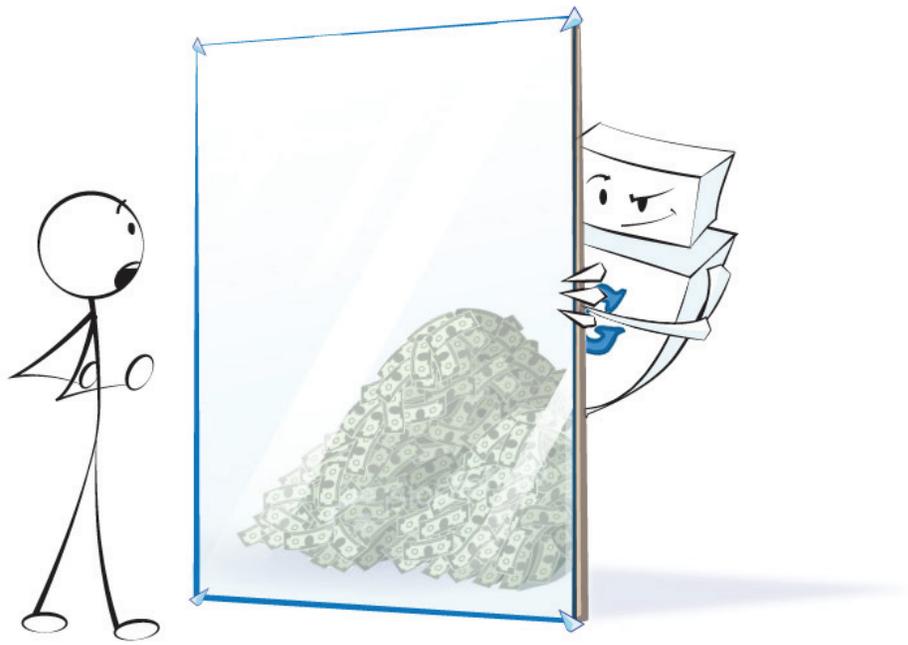
But Google's products don't always offer the best answers. In the case of Google+, one leading search expert said, "Google is clearly leveraging its power in search to build up Google+."

Why? In the words of one Google executive: "To the degree that we host content, we ultimately have a monetary incentive to drive people to those pages."

No wonder one senator speculated that Google had "cooked" its results.

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Think Google's free?

Google sold over \$36 billion of targeted advertising in 2011.

Every time you use "free" Google products like Search, Maps or Gmail, Google is collecting data about you.

See, from Google's perspective, your personal information is very, very good to know because the more information it has about you, the more money it can make selling advertising.

It drives ad prices higher—and those costs get passed on to consumers like you.

As one Google executive said, "We don't monetize the thing we create...we monetize the people that use it."

Remember that the next time you're using one of Google's "free" products.

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Caught in Google's web?

When a company says one thing, but does another, it makes you wonder. Take Google. Google talks a lot about putting users first, but CEO Larry Page wrote that, "Advertising income often provides an incentive to provide poor quality search results."

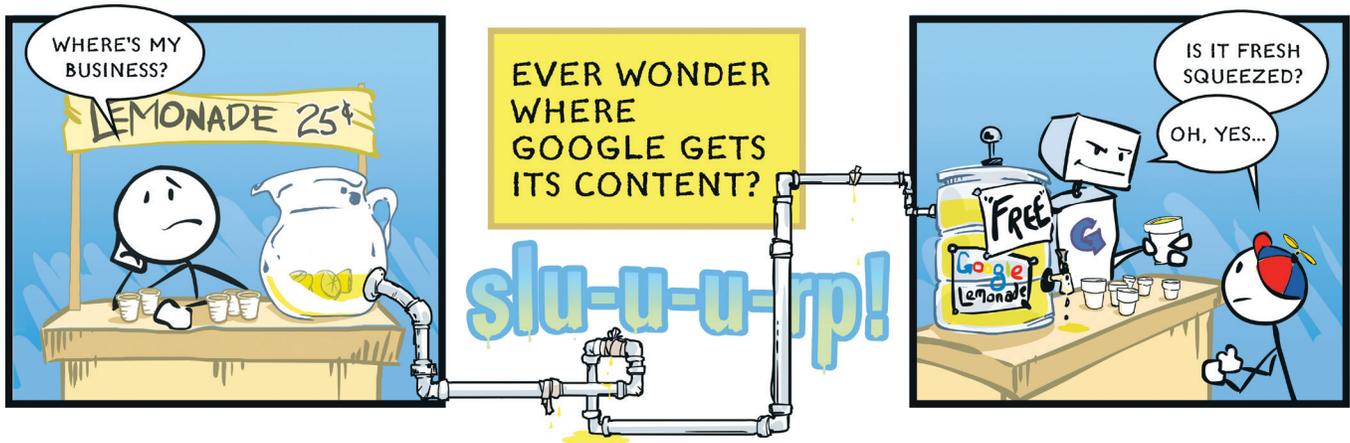
Google says it respects users' privacy, but Chairman Eric Schmidt said Google's policy is to "get right up to the creepy line."

Is Google all about users? In a sense, yes. As one Google executive said, "more users, more information, more information, more users, more advertisers, more users...the engine that can't be stopped."

More users trapped in Google's web means more money for Google.

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What's the secret to Google's success?

Stealing content from competing sites and using it as your own? Steering users away from competitors' sites by placing your own at the top of search results? How about "a team of people working on a Google project...misrepresent[ing]" Google's relationship with a competitor in order to drive customers to a new Google product?

That was just in 2011.

Turns out, when you control more than 79% of all searches, like Google does, you don't have to play fair! Just ask companies that compete with Google in specialized search.

In fact, two major technology-industry CEOs recently told Congress they wouldn't try to launch their companies today, given Google's current business practices. Bad news for innovation and job growth.

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