The Bigger they are the more they Require Regulation

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> It's no secret that insufficient oversight and regulation of the major banks and financial institutions resulted in the global economic crash of 2008 -- a crisis the world continues to struggle with but could have easily avoided. The literal 'too big to fail' notion was exposed as mirage/myth -- as we now all know, it was the biggest that not only failed but brought the house down with them! The removal of regulatory safeguards by Wall St servant president, Bill Clinton, ensured abuse and instability in the future.

Eric Schmidt, Google Chairman

It is human nature to err but it is stupidity not to learn from one's mistakes! No company should ever be allowed to dominate any industry or field of endeavour and no company should be allowed to exert undue influence/pressure in any arena by virtue of it size or specialisation. We have seen, too many times, catastrophic results for failing to observe a few simple rules and regulations.

So let's put it to the test, have we really learned anything or are the same corrupt forces still in control? It seems the later applies, as GOOGLE amply demonstrates.

The company is a data juggernaut and exerts far too much influence in the IT world. Could we expect negative behaviours, abuses and questionable practices from this company due to its size and disproportionate influence in the highly specialised field in which it operates? You bet we can!

Google has been hauled before antitrust bodies at home and abroad for data manipulation and other irregularities; it has entered into a business relationship with the criminal CIA and its Chairman, Eric Schmidt, regularly attends Bilderberg gatherings -- Bilderberg is a shadowy organisation that is reputed to shape future world directions and policy for all western nations! But arrive at your own conclusions regarding Google.

Politico report follows:

> **Federal Trade Commission petitioned to monitor Google's search Algorithm**
> by Steve Friess and Elizabeth Wasserman
>
> Google should allow the government to monitor its secret sauce — its search code — and

stop artificially favoring its own results when people search for flights, products, restaurant reviews and more, a coalition of major competitors has told the FTC.

FairSearch.org, which represents Expedia, Trip Advisor, Kayak, Nokia, Microsoft and several other tech companies, revealed its list of “remedies” for Google’s alleged anti-competitive behavior to POLITICO this week as the FTC considers filing antitrust charges or negotiating a settlement with the company by year’s end.

“Google’s own products should be subject to the same algorithm as other products,” said Tom Barnett, counsel for FairSearch member Expedia, who formerly headed the Justice Department’s Antitrust Division. “Given Google’s past conduct, Google should not be able to hard-code Google Finance, Google Shopping, Google Travel and its other products as top search results.”

The FTC has been probing Google for more than 18 months amid a wide array of allegations that the Mountain View, Calif., company engages in anti-competitive practices.

The FTC declined comment on the probe or FairSearch’s recommendations.

“We continue to work cooperatively with the Federal Trade Commission and are happy to answer any questions they may have,” Google spokesman Adam Kovacevich said.

FairSearch members have discussed with FTC staff and officials several ideas for how Google ought to alter its behavior — and possibly its structure — to address concerns over alleged abuse of monopoly power in search and search advertising. The group has also requested Google be barred from entering into exclusive contracts in search advertising and prohibited from “scraping” content, such as restaurant reviews, from other sites and using it in Google products.

One key component to enforce the conditions would be the appointment by the FTC of a “technical monitor,” similar to the court-appointed technical committee that monitored Microsoft’s Windows operating system code in an antitrust case a decade ago. The monitor for Google, FairSearch suggested, would not regulate but report to the FTC to ensure the company adheres to fair rankings and does not mathematically weight the results in favor of its products — or against rivals.

“Appointing a monitor who has access to Google’s algorithm on a confidential basis and who reports back to the agency can deter Google from improperly manipulating its algorithm,” Barnett said. “For example, Google would be less likely to include a line that provides ‘If competitor of Google minus 20 on ranking.’”

Google said such a type of monitoring would be tantamount to government regulation of search engine results, which the company said consumers overwhelming oppose, according to a National Taxpayers Union survey.

One of FairSearch members’ top demands is that Google submit its own ancillary services — specialized websites for searching air travel, shopping, local reviews and other specialty services — to the same ranking system as other, competing sites.

In particular, travel-booking sites believe that Google’s insistence on providing flight costs provided by airlines or by its exclusive relationship with Orbitz is problematic. The Google results, which occasionally are not the lowest fares, crowd out links that would normally surface higher up, disadvantaging both competitors and the consumer, Barnett said.

Google has argued that there is no one algorithm — but hundreds that work in concert to deliver the most useful answer to users — so such oversight would be unwieldy and could harm the quality of search results. In addition, the company points out that rival search services, including Yahoo and Bing, have adopted similar “universal search” processes that often list their own products first because those are believed to be most useful to consumers.

Another FairSearch concern relates to “scraping,” the practice of grabbing excerpts of reviews from sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp and incorporating them in digests of reviews on Google Places in such a way that it’s unnecessary for users to go to the source.

Barnett alleged that such sites are unfairly forced by Google to choose between allowing this unrestricted use of its content or opting out of being listed in Google search altogether. FairSearch wants Google to allow a third option — to be listed but not have its content scraped and used for Google’s own products.

“You could set it to permit use of content for search or use for search and anything else,” he said. “That would be a machine-readable way to enable sites to prevent Google from using their content in Google’s products.”

Google argues that use of such excerpts is protected under the First Amendment’s fair-use doctrine. The company has also maintained that competitors can seek to remove their content from Google by including coding that prohibits scraping or crawling.

FairSearch also wants the FTC to prevent Google from demanding exclusive terms in contracts or agreements related to markets in which Google has dominance — the group defines those markets as Web search, paid search advertising and its Android operating system.

Two of the key “remedies” that Fairsearch members want addressed regard search advertising, in particularly exclusive restrictions in Google’s contracts for Ad Words and enforcing either legal or technical restrictions on advertisers or their third-party agents from porting information and application programming interfaces of their ad campaigns to rival sites, such as Microsoft’s Bing search engine.

“It’s reasonable to make sure Google doesn’t inhibit advertisers from coordinating ad campaigns on Ad Words with ad campaigns on another search site,” Barnett said.

Google has said it already allows portability of Ad Words information by putting the information into other files and reformatting it, which takes “a matter of minutes,” the company said in a blog post.

FairSearch also wants Google to more clearly label any search results in which Google has a financial interest or is paid to present, something the company claims it already does.

“This is ultimately holding Google to what it promised. They said, ‘We’re not going to intersperse ads into our search results. We’re going to separate them out so that they are not in the middle of the natural results our algorithm says are most relevant to the users’ queries,” Barnett said. “To help remedy Google’s past conduct, there ought to be natural results and ads, and there should not be confusing hybrids.”

FairSearch members said that some more structural changes may be appropriate, if the commission concludes that Google has already inflicted harm on rivals, such as requiring Google to divest some of the vertical search products that benefited from abuse of Google’s alleged dominance of markets or requiring the company to license data.

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1112/84031.html?hp=l8
