

West takes Internet freedom for granted: Google boss

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In a stout defence of [Internet freedoms](#) at the [World Economic Forum](#) in Davos, Schmidt also said that rather than be seen as contributing to job losses, the web was a great opportunity for businesses to grow.

Schmidt told delegates he had just returned from a visit to Libya after the revolution that toppled Moamer Kadhafi, a trip which had underlined the value of the Internet in societies where phones are tapped and media

is state-run.

"The thing I learnt most about the Arab Spring is that we take the Internet for granted here," said Schmidt, Google's executive chairman.

"When you live in country where censorship is the norm ... the Internet is your only communications mechanism."

The role of the Internet in the Arab Spring was memorably illustrated by Wael Ghonim, Google's head of marketing for the Middle East and North Africa, who administered the Facebook page that helped spark Egypt's revolution.

Schmidt said an uncensored Internet could ensure the new generation of Arab leaders does not repeat the same pattern of corruption of the old regimes.

He proposed it becomes mandatory for politicians running for office to disclose their assets on the Internet.

Schmidt, whose own firm employs some 30,000 people, also said the Internet should not be blamed for problems in the [labour market](#), arguing that: "It's important not to fear [technological innovation](#) and revolution."

He said that governments had to address what he called "a huge labour shortage for highly educated people" in manufacturing.

"There are plenty of countries, (the) United States and other countries that I have visited, that are very short of skilled people," he said.

He said the web worked to the benefit of small business as "there's no better tool" to find customers, adding: "A reasonable expectation is that the access to the Internet will produce a very large number of smaller

companies."

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