

Google tied search results position to promotion of its own social network, writer says

September 4 2017, by Ethan Baron, The Mercury News



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After claims that Google got a think-tank research team fired for criticizing the company, a journalist is alleging other abuses by the

company.

A former member of New America Foundation's Open Markets initiative told the New York Times that his team was fired because Google's parent firm Alphabet, a funder, was upset that the team had applauded a huge European Union fine against Google and called on regulators to act against the company and "other dominant platform monopolists."

New America Foundation and Google disputed that account of the demise of Open Markets.

Now, Gizmodo reporter Kashmir Hill is claiming that when she worked for Forbes six years ago, Google told the magazine's staff that if publishers didn't add a button for its "Plus" social network at the bottom of stories, those articles would come up lower in search results.

"Google's dominance in search and news give it tremendous power over publishers," Hill wrote Thursday. "By tying [search results](#) to the use of Plus, Google was using that muscle to force people to promote its social network."

Google did not respond to a request for comment.

Hill published her story, and "Google promptly flipped out," she wrote. "This was in 2011, around the same time that a congressional antitrust committee was looking into whether the company was abusing its powers.

"I was told by my higher-ups at Forbes that Google representatives called them saying that the article was problematic and had to come down.

"The implication was that it might have consequences for Forbes, a

troubling possibility given how much traffic came through Google searches and Google News."

Google did not dispute the story's contents, but said the meeting where the Plus issue was discussed was confidential, Hill wrote. After "continued pressure" from her bosses, she took the story down, even though she had identified herself as a journalist for the meeting and hadn't been told it was confidential, she wrote.

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Citation: Google tied search results position to promotion of its own social network, writer says (2017, September 4) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-09-google-tied-results-position-social.html>

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