How Google Manipulates The Entire Internet In Favor Of Google's Insiders And Executives

[Profile picture for user Tyler Durden](#)

Submitted by Mike Krieger

An under-the-radar startup funded by billionaire Eric Schmidt has become a major technology vendor for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, underscoring the bonds between Silicon Valley and Democratic politics.

The Groundwork, according to Democratic campaign operatives and technologists, is part of efforts by Schmidt—the executive chairman of Google parent-company Alphabet—to ensure that Clinton has the engineering talent needed to win the election. And it is one of a series of quiet investments by Schmidt that recognize how modern political campaigns are run, with data analytics and digital outreach as vital ingredients that allow candidates to find, court, and turn out critical voter blocs.

There is also another gap in play: The shrinking distance between Google and the Democratic Party. Former Google

executive Stephanie Hannon is the Clinton campaign's chief technology officer, and a host of ex-Googlers are currently employed as high-ranking technical staff at the Obama White House. Schmidt, for his part, is one of the most powerful donors in the Democratic Party—and his influence does not stem only from his wealth, estimated by Forbes at more than $10 billion.

According to campaign finance disclosures, Clinton's campaign is the Groundwork's only political client. Its employees are mostly back-end software developers with experience at blue-chip tech firms like Netflix, Dreamhost, and Google.

– From last year's post: **Meet "Groundwork" – Google Chairman Eric Schmidt's Stealth Startup Working to Make Hillary Clinton President**

I don't often say drop everything you're doing and watch this, but I am saying just that.

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The narrator mentioned a study by Robert Epstein of the *American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology* and the former editor-in-chief of *Psychology Today*. *Politico* covered the topic last year in a piece, [How Google Could Rig the 2016 Election](). Here are a few excerpts:

> America's next president could be eased into office not just by TV ads or speeches, but by Google's secret decisions, and no one— except for me and perhaps a few other obscure researchers— would know how this was accomplished.

Research I have been directing in recent years suggests that Google, Inc., has amassed far more power to control elections—indeed, to control a wide variety of opinions and beliefs—than any company in history has ever had. Google's search algorithm can easily shift the voting preferences of undecided voters by 20 percent or more—up to 80 percent in some demographic groups—with virtually no one knowing they are being manipulated, according to [experiments](#) I conducted recently with Ronald E. Robertson.

Given that many elections are won by small margins, this gives Google the power, right now, to flip upwards of 25 percent of the national elections worldwide. In the United States, half of our presidential elections have been won by margins under 7.6 percent, and the 2012 election was won by a margin of only 3.9 percent—well within Google's control.

What we call in our research the Search Engine Manipulation Effect (SEME) turns out to be one of the largest behavioral effects ever discovered. Our [comprehensive new study](#), just published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), includes the results of five experiments we conducted with more than 4,500 participants in two countries. Because SEME is virtually invisible as a form of social influence, because the effect is so large and because there are currently no specific regulations anywhere in the world that would prevent Google from using and abusing this technique, **we believe SEME is a serious threat to the democratic system of government.**

According to [Google Trends](), at this writing Donald Trump is currently trouncing all other candidates in search activity in 47 of 50 states. Could this activity push him higher in search rankings, and could higher rankings in turn bring him more support? Most definitely—depending, that is, on how Google employees choose to adjust numeric weightings in the search algorithm. Google acknowledges adjusting the algorithm 600 times a year, but the process is secret, so what effect Mr. Trump's success will have on how he shows up in Google searches is presumably out of his hands.

Our new research leaves little doubt about whether Google has the ability to control voters. In laboratory and online experiments conducted in the United States, we were able to boost the proportion of people who favored any candidate by between 37 and 63 percent after just one search session. The impact of viewing biased rankings repeatedly over a period of weeks or months would undoubtedly be larger.

In our basic experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups in which search rankings favored either Candidate A, Candidate B or neither candidate. Participants were given brief descriptions of each candidate and then asked how much they liked and trusted each candidate and whom they would vote for. Then they were allowed up to 15 minutes to conduct online research on the candidates using a Google-like search engine we created called Kadoodle.

Each group had access to the same 30 search results—all real search results linking to real web pages from a past election. Only the ordering of the results differed in the three groups. People could click freely on any result or shift between any of five different results pages, just as one can on Google's search engine.

When our participants were done searching, we asked them those questions again, and, voilà: On all measures, opinions shifted in the direction of the candidate who was favored in the rankings. Trust, liking and voting preferences all shifted predictably.

There are three credible scenarios under which Google could easily be flipping elections worldwide as you read this:

First, there is the Western Union Scenario: Google's executives decide which candidate is best for us—and for the company, of course—and they fiddle with search rankings accordingly. There is precedent in the United States for this kind of backroom king-making. Rutherford B. Hayes, the 19th president of the United States, was put into office in part because of strong support by Western Union. In the late 1800s, Western Union had a monopoly on communications in America, and just before the election of 1876, the company did its best to assure that only

positive news stories about Hayes appeared in newspapers nationwide. It also shared all the telegrams sent by his opponent's campaign staff with Hayes's staff. Perhaps the most effective way to wield political influence in today's high-tech world is to donate money to a candidate and then to use technology to make sure he or she wins. The technology guarantees the win, and the donation guarantees allegiance, which Google has certainly tapped in recent years with the Obama administration.

*Note: Since publishing this post, there have been several articles written "debunking" the SourceFed video. One argument is that Google tends to present less aggressive or negative results for all candidates when compared to let's say Bing. When I tested this out for Donald Trump, I found this to be a reasonable argument.

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That said, I still have a hard time reconciling some of the following. For example, in January's post, [So What Does Google Search Have to Say About Clinton vs. Sanders…](#), I noted the following:

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If I do it today it looks like this:

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Screen Shot 2016-06-10 at 1.48.59 PM

I'm no search engine expert, and I don't claim to be. But "Bernie Sanders is the zodiac killer" as #2 autocomplete. Wasn't that supposed to be Ted Cruz?

So is Google manipulating search to help Hillary? Nobody knows for certain. **One thing is for sure...**

[Screen Shot 2016-06-10 at 8.52.41 AM](#)