

Google and the Nimbus Protests: A Governance Challenge

While reading this case, I learned multiple things pertaining to the impact that decisions have on a large company, how everyone is affected by those decisions, and the ripple effect of those decisions for a long period of time after a decision was made, possibly altering the course of a company permanently if not handled correctly. The decisions that the CEO of Google Sundar Pichai had to make were neither easy nor the only answer that was there, as there were many different directions that he could have taken to resolve the discourse between the company and some employees over Project Nimbus.

One of the things that I learned from reading this case is the extent to which one singular decision, in this case it was Google's commitment to Project Nimbus with the Israeli Government, had such a large effect on the company's view. As a result of making this decision, 48 incredibly important employees were fired, as well as ratings and mainstream media's opinion on Google were altered permanently. With a company as large as Google, so many aspects need to be put in each little decision, as some people in the executive meeting directly disagreed with the decisions already made to that point before the meeting, especially people who had stake in that same decision. With a big company you cannot make what you think is a simple decision in a day, but rather to make the right decision it can take multiple days or even longer to truly discuss the extent of impacts that your decision could have. Generative AI helped me learn this aspect of the case as it discusses the true impact of its future, as well as current ethical challenges, a scope that I didn't fully consider when I was answering the questions myself.

Another aspect of the impact of decisions that I learned from this case was the almost infinite decisions that can be made for one singular problem. When I am discussing an issue and trying to solve it, either by myself or with other people, we tend to only come up with 4-5 solutions to a current issue with it usually being a small-scale issue. However, in this case, Sundar Pichai and his colleagues had to make a decision that permanently affected the view on their company as well as every aspect of it, such as who applies to work there, and who they can work with in future partnerships. I learned that while making solutions to issues, you can almost come up with infinite solutions that all have different

effects and implications. Sundar had to decide whether he should terminate a \$1.2 Billion US dollar contract or not, but also if he should try and renegotiate and possibly lose it that way. When making decisions for a company, you can't take anything lightly and truly need to think about every single decision you make, as there is almost always a different path you can take in the moment that can alter the results. Generative AI helped with this aspect of learning as it came up with possible considerations, such as using progressive discipline instead of firing the employees, or creating a "structured ethics review path" that would assess use-case risks and publish guardrails for the company. These are all things that I didn't think of when coming up with possible things that Sundar could have done differently, making Generative AI a valuable asset to me in this scenario.

The final important thing I learned from this case and Generative AI is how one decision can have deadly effects on an organization as a whole. In this scenario with Google, they continued their partnership with the Israeli government according to NPR, where on April 19th, 2024, Time magazine "obtained an internal company document that showed Israel's Ministry of Defense" still contracted with Google as recently as March of that year. I consider this not a large loss to the company as while they may have lost support and some employees, society's view of them remains strong and they still exist today. However, there are some other examples of large detrimental effects that one decision has had on a company. Take BlackBerry for example, where they were a heavy innovator within the cellphone industry during the 2010s. They eventually made the decision to not continue to innovate with their phones and cater to younger audiences who were beginning to use their product and as a result their legacy in the public view is, according to Matt Johnson, a star in the film about BlackBerry, in an interview with the Guardian, he states, "The general legacy of the BlackBerry is one of a company that couldn't see the writing on the wall." This company made a large decision, and it ended up backfiring and seriously harming their brand for many years to come. Generative AI helped me understand this topic as while discussing it, I had it describe the true effects of one large decision, and while talking about it we discussed what could have happened if some of these companies made another decision.

Overall, I feel like I learned a lot about how to make decisions, who it affects, and the magnitude of making those decisions and that some decisions affect more people than you may think, which you should consider the next time you make a big decision. Generative AI had a large impact on my research during this study as it helped me understand the true magnitude of these topics by providing unique perspectives and

examples that gave a full understanding of the decision-making process and the effects of it. I also feel that this case study was a great way to show that the pressure of decision making on a time constraint can be one of the most painful and pressuring things a human can do, and if you aren't careful, it can be incredibly detrimental

Citations:

Kerr, Dara. "Google Worker Says the Company Is "Silencing Our Voices" after Dozens Are Fired." *NPR*, 19 Apr. 2024, www.npr.org/2024/04/19/1245757317/google-worker-fired-israel-project-nimbus-cloud-protestor.

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