Twitter Thread by Jessie @ Chicago



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Why did I leave Google? A thread.

This thread is going to include quotes from Wired's "Three Years of Misery Inside Google, the Happiest Company in Tech" because I'm not a professional writer https://t.co/XD417wVHiU

When I joined Google, I fell in love with the company immediately. I was excited to come to work, not just for the technical challenges, but because I really felt I was making a difference and working for the good guys.

I spent 20% of my week working on an app that helped people find lost loved ones after natural disasters. I spent more free time speaking to students about technology and diversity. For an entire school year, I taught CS classes twice a week at a local low income high school.

The company was open. We had a weekly meeting called TGIF where anyone in the company could ask questions of, and raise concerns with, the execs. We got real answers.

At the time, Rachel Whetstone was a VP at Google and you knew when she answered your question at TGIF, you were going to get an honest and sincere answer with a clear plan to fix things and no excuses. Rachel Whetstone left Google in 2015.

In 2017, Google bid for Project Maven, a contract with the US Government that would incorporate AI into drones. "When Google won the Maven contract in late September, the company opted not to say anything at all—even to its own employees."

I joined Google because we were the good guys. Building AI for weapons isn't a good guy thing. So they didn't tell us.

In 2018, it came out that Google had been planning to relaunch in China with censored search, a project known as Dragonfly.

"The engine would blacklist search terms like 'human rights' and 'student protest,' and would produce government-controlled results for 'air quality.' "

This project was kept secret internally as well. Can't let the employees know we're not the good guys.

In 2018, it came out that "a woman who worked for Google had accused Android cofounder Andy Rubin of coercing her to perform oral sex in a hotel room". Rubin had been let go with a $90 million severance package.

The company's goodbye email included:

"I want to wish Andy all the best with what's next. With Android he created something truly remarkable — with a billion-plus happy users."

different source for this one: https://t.co/y3Mc8sHxRo

"After Mr. Rubin left, the company invested millions of dollars in his next venture."

https://t.co/y3Mc8sHxRo

There's some controversy over the payout and if it was necessary or not. But there's no two sides to investing in his next company. He sexually assaulted an employee and we continued to work with him.

"The story didn't stop at Rubin. Another high-performing executive, Amit Singhal, the former head of Google Search, was given a multimillion-dollar exit package after a female employee accused him of groping her at an off-site work event."

"A third, Richard DeVaul, allegedly told a female job candidate that he was in a polyamorous relationship during her interview and invited her to meet him at Burning Man, where he asked if he could give her a massage."
DeVaul was not fired.

The coverups surprised me as much as the sexual assault and harassment. We didn't do stuff like this here. We hired good people and didn't let people get away with stuff like this. We cared about making a safe environment for women, just look at all our diversity initiatives.

And we definitely didn't cover it up. But we had hidden Project Maven and Dragonfly from employees, why not this?

Again and again, we asked the execs for answers. The answers became less sincere. Questions were dodged. We were given corp speak and sometimes actual lies.

On November 1, 2018 I walked out with twenty thousand other employees around the world. In New York, there were so many of us I couldn't get anywhere near close enough to hear the speakers.

That week, I and a few other female engineers were invited to a meeting with a VP of my org. One woman talked about how she felt confident coming out of the walkout. That she felt the company had really come together and she was so proud to be at Google.

We all disagreed. Later in the meeting, it came out that she was not an engineer but was actually part of HR.

In December 2018, one of the walkout organizers, Meredith Whitaker "was told she would have to leave the Google Cloud organization, where she had worked for three years."

Another organizer, Claire Stapleton, "was told that her role at YouTube would be “restructured” and she would lose half her reports and responsibilities."

They held a retaliation sit in in New York where we listened to their stories and the anonymized stories of others who had experienced retaliation.

This was the last straw for me. After Dragonfly and Maven, I no longer trusted the company to make ethical decisions.

After many reports of sexual harassment and assault by VPs with high exit packages, I no longer believed we had employees' best interests in mind, especially those of minorities.

And after the retaliation faced by walkout organizers, I no longer believed I could do anything about it.

I set my LinkedIn to "open to offers" the day the retaliation stories were published. I started interviewing soon after and submitted my resignation in July.

I have so much love for what Google used to be and that's why I stayed for so long. Maybe they can be that again, but I'm not going to work for a company I don't believe in while I wait to find out.

I ended that in a good spot but there's a few things I forgot to mention so tacking them onto the end

I want to be clear how obvious the retaliation was in the case of Claire Stapleton. She was literally told she would be demoted. After bringing in a lawyer, the decision was reversed. Because it was reversed, Google says she was never demoted.

According to a Google spokesperson “To reiterate, we don’t tolerate retaliation. Our employee relations team did a thorough investigation of her claims and found no evidence of retaliation."

https://t.co/JGmsOFjA3p

Additionally, during the walkout, Google was working to remove workplace protections for organizing converted activity over work email. This was not in response to the walkout but rather in response to a lawsuit filed by a fired right wing employee.

But there's no excuse for trying to remove workplace protections for employees. A good reason for that does not exist.