

[PDF] I'm Feeling Lucky: The Confessions Of Google Employee Number 59

Douglas Edwards - pdf download free book



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Description:

Comparing Google to an ordinary business is like comparing a rocket to an Edsel. No academic analysis or bystander's account can capture it. Now Doug Edwards, Employee Number 59, offers the first inside view of Google, giving readers a chance to fully experience the bizarre mix of camaraderie and competition at this phenomenal company. Edwards, Google's first director of marketing and brand management, describes it as it happened. We see the first, pioneering steps of

Larry Page and Sergey Brin, the company's young, idiosyncratic partners; the evolution of the company's famously nonhierarchical structure (where every employee finds a problem to tackle or a feature to create and works independently); the development of brand identity; the races to develop and implement each new feature; and the many ideas that never came to pass. Above all, Edwards—a former journalist who knows how to write—captures the “Google Experience,” the rollercoaster ride of being part of a company creating itself in a whole new universe.

I'm Feeling Lucky captures for the first time the unique, self-invented, yet profoundly important culture of the world's most transformative corporation.

Amazon Exclusive: A Q&A with Douglas Edwards

Q: Why is *I'm Feeling Lucky* different from other books about Google?

A: There have been many fine books written about Google and its impact on the world, but all have been told from an outsider's perspective. *I'm Feeling Lucky* is a personal accounting of what it felt like to be part of the company as it grew from sixty people to tens of thousands. I was a forty-one-year-old middle manager thrust into an unfamiliar world ruled by two brilliant founders with a unique management style, and the book details how difficult it was for me to make the adjustment.

Personal anecdotes are interspersed with an explanation of the key events in Google's technical development, largely told in the words of those who actually built the systems that made Google work as fast and well as it does. Many of these individuals have remained anonymous until now.

I'm Feeling Lucky is really aimed at those who are interested both in what Google did to ensure success during its formative years and how it felt to be an ill-prepared participant dropped into the heart of an exploding startup.

Q: What is it really like to work with co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin?

A: On a personal level, I found them to be pretty easy-going and approachable. Sergey has a wicked sense of humor and Larry always struck me as very sincere. They liked to surround themselves with intelligent, open minded, curious, and energetic people, who were not afraid to challenge their ideas. They always wanted people to think on a grander scale than they typically did and they didn't like people saying "no" rather than "here's a better way to do that." They didn't get hung up on titles, academic pedigree, or tenure at the company if an idea was a good one.

Q: What is the Google workplace like compared to other companies'?

A: Compared to every other place I had worked, it was pretty wonderful. We had free meals every day that were as good as any served by the finest local restaurants, great workout facilities, massage therapists and doctors on staff, and an annual ski trip for all employees. On the other hand, the stress and demands were constant and intense. I went through a couple of weeks at the *Mercury News* during a newspaper circulation war that really challenged me. At Google, it was like that every day for my five years at the company. We were expected to be available every hour of every day and lots of key decisions were made after midnight. If I wasn't there for the discussion, the decision was made without my input.

Q: In the book, you relay some very heated discussions about how Google dealt with user privacy issues. What were the most significant problems, and how did you handle them as one of the chief marketing executives?

A: The biggest privacy issue during my time at Google related to the launch of Gmail and the fact that it scanned mail to insert content-related ads in users' inboxes. That created a firestorm that engulfed the company and was very hard to extinguish. There were many contributing factors, but at its heart was the fact that engineers knew no person was reading user mail to insert ads and so insisted that there was NO privacy issue. While technically correct, this perspective denied the concerns of users who did not share the same trust and confidence in Google that its engineering staff did. The founders' insistence on not acknowledging users' fears made it difficult to respond to them in a sensitive manner. Eventually, we were able to get enough Gmail accounts out to journalists and opinion leaders to begin turning the tide, but the process was painful and damaging to Google's brand.

Q: What was it really like behind the scenes of the Google-AOL deal?

A: The negotiations with AOL were challenging and unpleasant for those involved from the Google side. AOL had little interest in Google initially, other than as a weapon to wield against Overture—the leading supplier of search-related advertising at the time. Overture and Google fought a pitched battle to win the account, which was worth more than a billion dollars in revenue, and threw everything they could at each other as AOL stood above the fray, egging them on.

Even as AOL became aware that Google's technology and ad relevance were superior to those of its competitor, and Google's potential for revenue generation was greater, they demanded more and more in terms of outrageous payment guarantees and access to the company's proprietary algorithms. When AOL ultimately signed the contract with Google, Overture tried one last desperate ploy to sabotage the deal.

AOL's enormous traffic guaranteed the success of Google's ad network, but as my book details, taking them on as a client was a high risk gamble that could easily have destroyed Google and driven it into bankruptcy.

Q: What do you regard as your most significant accomplishment while at Google?

A: From a marketing perspective, I would say it was creating and enforcing a brand architecture that put all of our emphasis on Google itself, instead of on innumerable individual sub-brands. Because of that, the Google name has not been diluted by competing with its own products. The only two exceptions during my time at the company were the social networking experiment orkut and the product search service Froogle. I argued against the latter name and lost, but ultimately Google recognized its mistake and changed the branding to "Google product search," which is what I had recommended.

Other areas I was proud to be part of included the company's response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the formulation of Google's corporate credo ("Ten things we've found to be true"), writing Google's April Fools jokes, and launching a highly visible engineering recruitment campaign.

Q: What should people know about Google that they don't already know?

A: People who only know Google as an omnipresent, omniscient online service should realize that the company began as a small group of well-intentioned geeks who truly wanted to make the world a better place. Along the way, the company was forced to confront the reality that the world didn't always see things from the same perspective, but the strength of their convictions led Google's executives to forge ahead regardless. The founders simply didn't have the patience to wait for the rest of the world to figure out that they were right. This hubris was present from the very beginning and is the source of many of Google's current conflicts. *I'm Feeling Lucky* helps readers to

understand how that attitude was formed and forged by specific events that occurred early in the company's history. That background will help readers better grasp why Google does things the way it does today.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Review

I'm Feeling Lucky is funny, revealing, and instructive, with an insider's perspective I hadn't seen anywhere before. I thought I had followed the Google story closely, but I realized how much I'd missed after reading—and enjoying—this book." —James Fallows, author of *Postcards from Tomorrow Square*

"Douglas Edwards is indeed lucky, sort of an accidental millionaire, a reluctant bystander in a sea of computer geniuses who changed the world. This is a rare look at what happened inside the building of the most important company of our time."—Seth Godin, author of *Linchpin*

"This is the first Google book told from the inside out. The teller is an ex-employee who joined Google early and who treats readers to vivid inside stories of what life was like before Google became a verb. Douglas Edwards recounts Google's stumble and rise with verve and humor and a generosity of spirit. He kept me turning the pages of this engrossing tale." —Ken Auletta, author of *Googled: The End of the World as We Know It*

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