

TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

GOOGLE

and the outcome of elections|



BY: DR. BRANDEN R. WILLIAMS



This March saw the return of one of my favorite series on Netflix; House of Cards.

As the drama in fictional Washington continues to build to a climax during their presidential election cycle, there is a separate arc focused on a fictitious search engine called Pollyhop. It's a Google-like company that is accused of being manipulated to show one candidate in a very positive light in order to sway public opinion. While the series is fictional, there are accusations floating around the real world that an organization called Groundwork, backed by one of Google's founders, is working

to put Hillary Clinton in the Whitehouse.

Some people believe that search engines display unbiased results based on our keywords. The reality is that there is a whole science dedicated to gaming search results based on a secret ranking algorithm that gets combined with your personal searching preferences. Think about your most recent searching expedition. Did you pull the information you sought from the top five results displayed or did you actually go to a second, third or deeper page for what you wanted?

If you are like most people, a large portion of the informational diet that makes up your reality comes from the top search results on page one.

BIAS IN HUMANS

When it comes to political views, debate rarely changes minds—it often leads to people simply becoming more entrenched in their own beliefs. Exploring the arguments of multiple sources with opposing perspectives and fact checking each might *continued on next page*

CONTENTS

- 01** GOOGLE AND THE
OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS
BY DR. BRANDEN R. WILLIAMS
- 04** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
LEFT OF BANG, WRITTEN BY
PATRICK VAN HORNE AND
JASON A. RILEY
REVIEWED BY JOHN STEVENSON
- 05** GEAR REVIEW:
PROPPER A-TACS BDU
- 06** SURVIVING EXECUTION ATTEMPTS
BY DORON BENBENISTY
- 09** DEEP PANDA: PRC CYBER-MILITIA
CONDUCTS SHAPING OPERATIONS?
BY RON SMITH
- 12** FARADAY CAGES
BY JIM LeBLANC
- 16** STABLE STANDING:
BUILD YOUR BEST POSITION
BY KEN JAVES
- 20** PROFILES OF COURAGE:
EDWARD BYERS

STAFF

DAVID MORRIS and "OX"	Publishers
CHRIS GRAHAM www.chrisgrahamauthor.com	Editor
JOHN HIGGS www.junkyard-dog.net	Copy Editor
BETTY SHONTS	Graphic Designer

OUR LAWYERS INSIST WE MAKE THE FOLLOWING DISCLAIMER: You may die in an emergency, even if you follow this training to the letter. You might get hurt doing some of the exercises suggested, hurt someone else, or be subject to civil or criminal liability if you do anything mentioned in this newsletter. Verify that the actions mentioned are legal where you are before even considering them. This is presented as a tool to help increase your chance of surviving natural and manmade disasters. While we guarantee your satisfaction with the information, we can not guarantee your survival or well-being. The author provides information about his experiences and preparations and gives general information. He is not an accountant, doctor, investment advisor or attorney and is not in the business of advising individuals on their specific situation. If you need specific professional assistance, please contact a local professional.

©COPYRIGHT 2016 TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS MATERIAL PROTECTED UNDER INTERNATIONAL AND FEDERAL COPYRIGHT LAWS AND TREATIES. ANY UNAUTHORIZED REPRINT OR USE OF THIS MATERIAL IS PROHIBITED. NO PART OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRODUCED OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY MEANS, ELECTRONIC OR MECHANICAL, INCLUDING PHOTOCOPIING, RECORDING, OR BY ANY INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM WITHOUT EXPRESS WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR / PUBLISHER.



REDDIT MEMBERS DECIDED TO HAVE A BIT OF FUN AT COMCAST'S EXPENSE BY TWEAKING IMAGE SEARCH RESULTS FOR THEIR NAME.

be a real step on the path to "truth." A honed awareness of the bias present in all human beings and inseparable from their spoken and written messages might be helpful as well.

But who has time for that? We tend to associate with people who think like we do, we choose to obtain news from sources that present it in a fashion we prefer and we gravitate toward things that match our internal sense of self.

Companies like Google know this and they customize your experience. If you've never seen Malcolm Gladwell's TED talk entitled, "Choice, happiness and spaghetti sauce,"¹ do yourself a favor and check it out. In this talk, the famed economist discusses how our happiness with a product can be improved through clustering desires. It's the reason why there are more than thirty varieties of spaghetti sauce on your neighborhood shelf and it will explain the psychology behind why you receive more happiness (or economic utility) from things that fit within your rose-colored world.

SEARCH BIAS

Google uses powerful algorithms to present searchers with information based on its vast catalogue of the web. Here's the interesting part of these algorithms—they are secret. With Google being the most popular search engine, everyone wants to find a way to get their results to the top of the list. There's ample research that demonstrates our general laziness and trust with Google, which means that careful positioning of results has the ability to make massive differences in product sales, or even sway public opinion.² The Google algorithm changes often, so individuals wanting to obtain (or retain) that top spot

must constantly tweak online presence to remain on the top of the stack for their searches. It's not a simple task. Google will take into account things you have clicked on, searched for or generally browsed and further customize the results and advertisements for you. As an example, I'm a huge fan of the spaghetti sauce talk, and I only had to type in spaghetti before Big Brother Google suggested the TED talk I was looking for.

Here's an example you can try. Open up Google, type "Comcast" in the search box and hit enter. Now, with the result list up, click on "Images." See if you find anything interesting on that page. Those interesting results come from a Reddit thread that is purposely manipulating the results to bring undesired iconography in the same window as a Comcast logo. This was done by a bunch of guys who just wanted to prove a point. Now imagine if someone wanted to impact the outcome of something as important as an election. Can the results be gamed? Yes. Google can shape your opinions on things from what you buy, who you associate with and the political candidate you might back.

Robert Epstein's article, *The New Mind Control*,³ describes timely research that shows how Google's page ranking can in fact influence someone's political opinion. In his study, he found that 75 percent of the subjects he sampled didn't even realize they were looking at biased search results, and that a fake or skewed candidate's approval rating increased by more than 48 percent based on a front page result. When Epstein conducted experimentation in India, the results were even more shocking. At some point, many people decided that searching the Internet just got easier because the things we wanted

were always returned on the front page. Just as significantly, many people are unaware that the results for two different people searching for the same thing will be different.

Here's a fun thing you can do. Pick a political topic that you are passionate about for which you have done some internet research. You probably have your opinion quite well framed. Now, using that same search engine, see if you can find sites that describe the opposing view. Use the most generic term possible (not one with bias in it) such as "Second Amendment" or "entitlements." Do the results you see present all sides of the issue on the first page or are they heavily colored to your shade of rose? It's not because your perspective is secretly the world's dominant perspective.

MANIPULATING PUBLIC OPINION

Any time you have an election there are always accusations of questionable things happening during the campaign. It starts with mudslinging and can end up as serious as accusations of voter fraud. Elections to public offices is a high-stakes game and the candidates who vie for those spots play to win. Campaign teams employ lots of techniques during the game, such as Obama's use of Data Scientists to figure out how to raise money and propel him into a second term³ Leveraging math to understand the most important counties to campaign in is a useful technique to maximize a candidate's time in the field, but deliberately manipulating public opinion through search results isn't.

Much like the Comcast example above, the actions of the few have the potential to affect the masses. Whether it's a group of internet trolls or something more subtle (and probably more effective.) For example, the internet that Americans currently access has a lot of openness and freeness-information can generally be freely uploaded without censorship or control, but it can't be accessed or found without censorship and control. Users with the intent of shaping public opinion know this and can be successful after a few hours creating lots of fake accounts on sites such as Twitter, setting up a few informational websites, and perhaps doctoring a few Fox News screenshot to make things seem official⁴.

What would happen if an organization

with a strategic or political agenda leveraged data science capabilities combined with targeted manipulation of search results and a subtle but effective spread of misinformation? Is this currently being done? How much of our reality is crafted for us? If they knew that an election could be won by targeting voters in 200 counties spread across America, would it be possible to leverage something like doctored search results to achieve their goals?

CONCLUSION

Most of you are aware that bias exists everywhere you look. Few people are unable to point out examples of it in the nightly news when it opposes their own. Google's searching algorithms are part of Google's intellectual property or their "secret sauce." Changes to the secret sauce lead to changes in how information is displayed to those using the service. In the case of Epstein's research in India, someone wanting to sway public opinion would get a huge return on their result-hacking investment by targeting a community who doesn't realize the results are gamed. So, perhaps, replicating Epstein's research in swing states to figure out which kinds of people are viable for swaying and would cast their vote for the desired candidate could dramatically impact the outcome of a standard election process.

That doesn't mean that new powers of "oversight" and regulation would necessarily solve the problem without creating other problems of equal magnitude. Perhaps the best solution is inoculation of the public by exposing the techniques, and hyper vigilance for evidence of these endeavors. The day that every person on the street understands how this is done and can describe an example of it, may be the day that the weapon has been largely neutralized. ✓

BIO:

Branden R. Williams, DBA, CISSP, CISM is a seasoned security executive, ISSA Distinguished Fellow, and technology executive sought after by global companies to consult on their digital business initiatives. Read his blog, buy his book or contact him directly at www.brandenwilliams.com.

NOTES

1. https://www.ted.com/talks/malcolm_gladwell_on_spaghetti_sauce?language=en
2. <https://aeon.co/essays/how-the-internet-flips-elections-and-alters-our-thoughts>
3. Ibid.

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON NOW!

FROM TACTICS & PREPAREDNESS'

CHRIS GRAHAM



После развала Советского Союза и превращения КГБ в СВР, организации-наследники успешно продолжили активность в Америке. Что, если президент США был избран в результате дезинформационной компании начатой десятки лет назад? Был ли обвал финансовых рынков 2008г случайностью? Какова роль подрывной деятельности в сегодняшних войнах с исламским терроризмом? Что будет дальше?

"Chris Graham writes the way he flies: low, fast and hair raising. He's one of the best brightest and bravest Marines I've ever known. Now he's proven himself to be a sharp-edged master of suspense. All who savor a thrilling ride will get one in Election: Dezinformatsiya and the Great Game." - Oliver North

ДЕЗИНФОРМАЦИЈА