

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman, Founder and CEO
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Sundar Pichai
CEO
Google
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

November 22, 2016

Dear Mark and Sundar,

As the trade organization representing brands that seek long-term consumer trust through the creation of high quality news, information and entertainment, we feel compelled to provide our perspective on the dangerous proliferation of “fake news” throughout the digital ecosystem. Digital Content Next (DCN) members include companies that have earned the trust of consumers for more than a century to companies born in the digital era. The common thread that weaves these companies together is the trust they seek to earn every day by providing the highest quality content. We’re not suggesting that our members always “get it right,” but accuracy, depth and fairness are core to their mission. And transparency is vital when things go wrong. Your services succeed or fail depending on the efficacy of our work. We are writing this letter to offer our help in fixing the issue. We are the only trade association that exclusively represents more than 75 premium publishers – arguably the world’s experts at creating real and *trusted* content.

To be clear, our plea is not that you somehow attempt to evaluate bias or censor legitimate speech. Moreover, your recent statements about potentially identifying “fake news” for what it is, and depriving the providers of this noxious material the economic sustenance to create it in the first place, are encouraging and constructive. However, to paraphrase a recent *New York Times* editorial, we believe you owe your users, and democracy itself, far more. Your companies make it a point to celebrate “moonshots” that require extraordinary vision, resources and engineering prowess. Your capacity to pursue these projects is built on your extraordinary dominance over the digital media landscape. Wouldn’t it make sense for you to pursue cleaning-up the garbage littering the digital media ecosystem with the same excitement, investment and vigilance with which you pursue these huge, visionary projects? We don’t see that in your public statements or actions. Over the years, you have claimed repeatedly that you are not media companies; instead, the word “utility” has been used, occasionally by your own executives. But if even 1% of the water in our local utility was polluted, wouldn’t it be right to move heaven and earth to clean it up?

Our members serve the public across the political spectrum. The last thing we would want is a litmus test for truth. We celebrate the fact that new, trusted brands can emerge online and truly allow the First Amendment to flourish. No one wishes to go back to a world of “gatekeepers” and distribution scarcity. It is for precisely this reason that you bear a special responsibility in society, one that you sometimes

appear naïve to. Our brands are proxies for the kind of accuracy that your users deserve. We won't reprise here the many examples of untruths that were propagated during the recent election campaign. We will simply state that our brands exist to guard against these outcomes, and that we all win when advertisers and consumers are served the highest quality content.

In a world where ever-increasing numbers of people get their news and information through globally-scaled, algorithmically determined "feeds," it is simply unacceptable to tolerate the blatantly false and misleading "fake news" that has come to litter the digital landscape. We regard our relationship as symbiotic; we all want the citizens of our societies to have access to the best possible information. We are in this together and regard our companies as essential partners in this effort. We are ready to devote time, resources and energy to help clean up this mess and welcome the opportunity to collaborate on solutions.

Yours truly,



Jason Kint
CEO
Digital Content Next