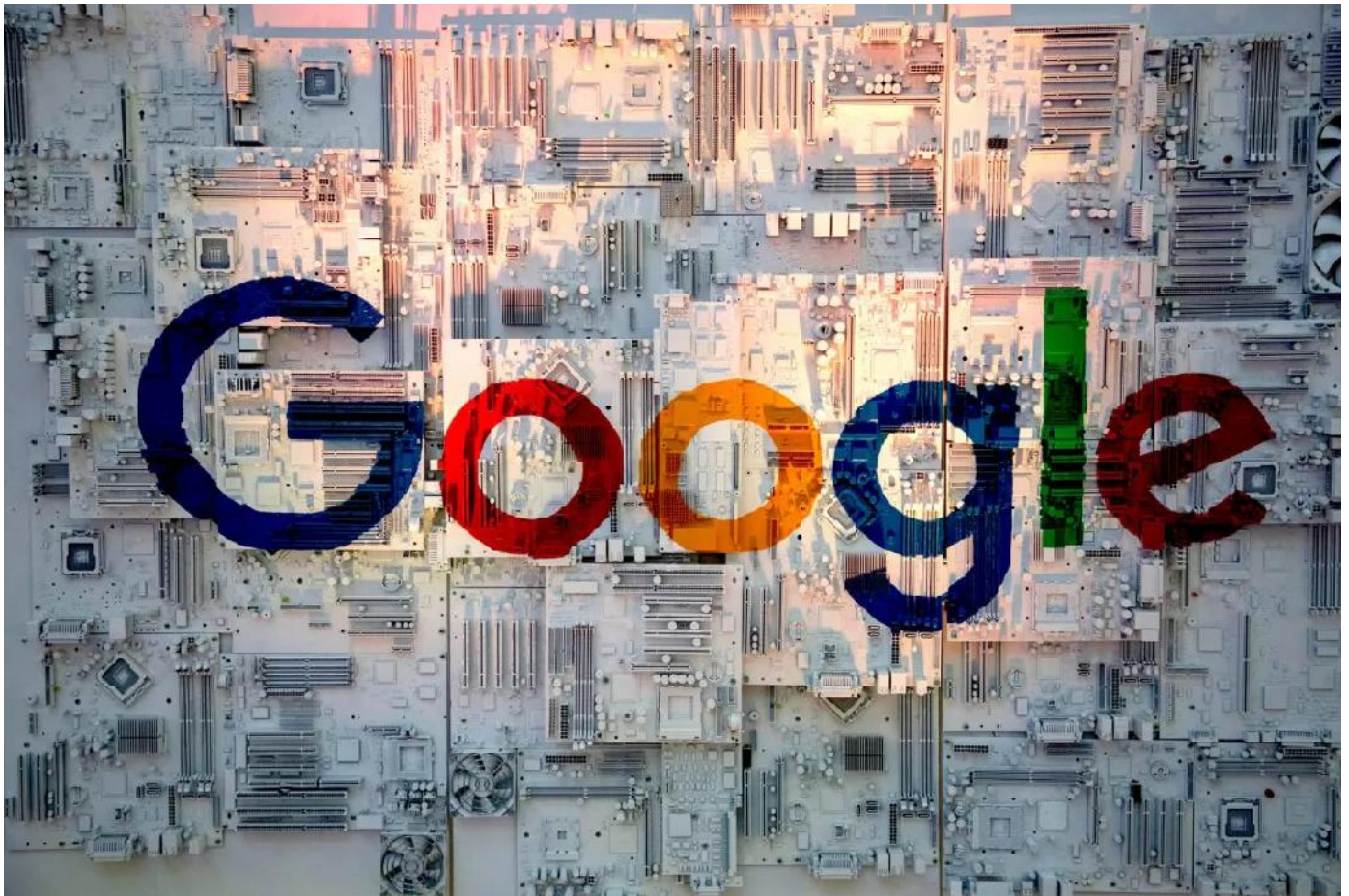


How Google Stopped the Red Wave

Google and other tech companies want you obsessing about conspiracy theories so you won't look at how they tampered with the 2022 midterm elections



The Google logo at a data center in Belgium on Oct. 21, 2022. (NICOLAS MAETERLINCK/BELGA MAG/AFP via Getty Images)



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Commentary

What happened to the gigantic red wave that was supposed to crush the Democrats in the midterm elections? Every Republican in the country is blaming everyone else for this disaster, but almost no one is looking in the right place—and that's exactly how the Big Tech companies like it.

Based on my team's research, Google, and to a lesser extent, Facebook and other tech monopolies, not only took steps to shift millions of votes to Democrats in the midterms, but they are using their influence to spread rumors and conspiracy theories to make sure people look everywhere for explanations—except at them.

Two days before the 2022 midterm elections, I published [an article explaining how Google](#) and other tech companies were shifting millions of votes without people knowing, and I also explained how I knew, without doubt, that this was occurring.

Google isn't the only culprit, but since they're the biggest, most aggressive, and most arrogant culprit, I'll focus on them in this article.

Over a period of months, Google nudged undecided voters toward voting blue by showing people [politically biased content in their search engine](#), [suppressing content they didn't want people to see](#), recommending left-leaning videos on YouTube ([pdf](#)) (which Google owns), [allegedly sending tens of millions of emails](#) to people's spam boxes, and [sending go-vote reminders](#) on their home page mainly to liberal and moderate voters.

These manipulations (and others) don't affect voters with strong points of view, but they can have an enormous impact on voters who are undecided ([pdf](#))—the people who decide the outcomes of close elections.

I know Google did these things (and more!) because, in 2022, my team and I were doing to them exactly what they do to us and our kids 24/7: We were monitoring the politically related content that Google and other tech companies were showing to actual voters—our politically diverse panel of 2,742 “field agents,” who were located mainly in swing states.

In particular, we were tracking what Google employees call “ephemeral experiences”—content that appears briefly, affects people, and then disappears. In 2018, in emails that leaked from the company, Googlers were discussing how they might use ephemeral experiences to change people’s views about Trump’s travel ban. They know how powerful ephemeral experiences can be. That’s one of the most closely held secrets of Google’s management.

Ephemeral content is ideal for manipulation purposes. If you get a go-vote reminder on Google’s home page (see the image below for an actual go-vote reminder sent to a liberal voter on Election Day), how would you know whether anyone else was getting it? You wouldn’t, and if you didn’t receive such a reminder, how would you know that anyone else had?



A go-vote reminder sent to a liberal voter at 11:25 a.m. on Nov. 8, 2022 (Screenshot via Google)

But we were capturing, aggregating, and analyzing the content that Google and other companies were sending to the computers of our field agents, so we could accurately estimate how many go-vote reminders Google was sending to liberals, moderates, and conservatives. In all, in the weeks leading up to the 2022 midterms, we preserved more than 2.5 million of those persuasive ephemeral experiences.

When we used similar methods to monitor content being sent by tech companies to voters before the 2020 presidential election, we found that Google was sending fewer go-vote reminders to conservatives than to moderates and liberals. Targeted messaging of this sort is a blatant manipulation that can, on Election Day in a national election in the United States, generate 450,000 extra votes for the favored candidate.

In 2020, we reported our findings to members of Congress, and on Nov. 5, 2020, three U.S. senators sent an intimidating letter ([pdf](#)) to the CEO of Google that summarized our data. As a result, Google turned off its manipulations. In the Georgia Senate runoffs that followed the presidential election, no one received a go-vote reminder from Google.

But we weren't so lucky this time around. The article I published just before the election had no effect on Google, and this year, we couldn't find a member of Congress to send a warning letter, although we came close.

As a result, Google search results remained politically biased on Election Day, and so did the up-next recommendations on YouTube. Google also sent out targeted go-vote reminders in most swing states.

If manipulations like these were being used nationwide in the months leading up to the midterm elections, Google alone might have shifted 80 million votes over time (with those votes scattered over hundreds of elections). We'll have a more precise estimate of the extent of vote shifting that occurred as we dig into our data in the coming weeks.

That's why the red wave fizzled—because Google had its digital thumb on the scale for months before the elections.

Look at history. Given inflation, the faltering economy, and President Joe Biden's low approval rating—not to mention the extensive vote redistricting that Republicans engineered in many states recently (also called gerrymandering)—the Republicans should easily have dominated the Senate races and picked up 60 or more seats in the House (as they did in the 2010 midterm elections when Barack Obama was in office). This time around, they'll be lucky to end up with a slim majority in the House and an even split in the Senate (which means that it remains under Democratic control).

Although we were unable to stop the manipulations in 2022, the good news is that we were able to preserve a treasure trove of incriminating evidence—those 2.5 million politically related ephemeral experiences. In 2023, this large dataset might be used by authorities to go after Big Tech. This will almost certainly occur if Republicans control the House.

And we're continuing to build a digital shield. By late 2023, we'll be monitoring the content that tech companies are sending to a representative sample of more than 20,000 voters and children in all 50 U.S. states 24 hours a day, and we'll report suspect content to authorities and journalists as we find it.

This digital shield—the first of its kind in the world—will protect our democracy and our children from potential manipulation by current and emerging technologies for many years to come.

Finally, a word of advice: In the coming weeks and months, you'll probably be bombarded with scary stories about how the midterm elections were tainted by rigged voting machines, fake ballots and other dirty tricks, just as you were after the 2020 presidential election. Please try your best to ignore those stories.

Dirty tricks like these are competitive; if one party can use them, so can the other. And even if some of the stories prove to be true (and most won't), dirty tricks of the sort people talk about online make little difference in election outcomes. Sometimes they shift only hundreds of votes; it's rare for them to shift thousands.

What's more, if these stories are spreading like wildfire on social media platforms, that's only because the tech companies want them to spread. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (both part of Meta), Twitter, and YouTube (owned by Google) have complete and absolute control over whether stories go viral.

Remember when Twitter and Facebook suppressed stories about Hunter Biden's laptop in 2020? Again, these companies can spread stories or suppress them as they please.

When you see a conspiracy theory spreading, you are often seeing an example of large-scale manipulation by misdirection. The tech companies allow such stories to spread—or even force them to spread—to turn your attention away from the companies themselves. If you think that there were fake ballots, you won't pay attention to the fact that tech companies might have shifted millions of votes in the midterms.

Sure, ballot stuffing sounds a lot more diabolical than “sending people targeted go-vote reminders,” but don't let yourself be fooled. Ballot stuffing is a competitive activity that has little net effect. But targeted register-to-vote and go-vote reminders on Google's home page, which is viewed more than 500 million times a day in the United States, can shift votes by the million.

And that kind of manipulation can't be counteracted, because it's controlled exclusively by the platform. People can't even see that kind of manipulation, and—except for the monitoring my team is doing—it also leaves no paper trail for authorities to trace.

If you see a conspiracy theory blowing up on a tech platform such as Facebook or even on Fox News (which often amplifies scary stories that are spreading online), ask yourself this: Is this story real, or am I being manipulated yet again by the tech lords who have taken control of our democracy (pdf)?

The chances are good that you're being manipulated—yet again.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.