

## **Rhetorical Analysis of Ed Zitron's "The Man Who Killed Google Search"**

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CS115 A1 Writing in Computer Science

October 11, 2024

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(Source: <https://www.wheresyoured.at/the-men-who-killed-google/>)

In his article, *The Man Who Killed Google Search*, Ed Zitron informs readers of Google's recently leadership switch and persuades them that it was the cause of an internal shift in company priorities, ultimately leading to the downfall of its once cherished search engine. He successfully does this by applying two rhetorical techniques. In order to prove his point, he appeals to ethos by citing countless primary sources and historical data, establishing himself as a knowledgeable journalist in the tech industry. To keep his readers engaged, he uses appeals to pathos by incorporating polarizing language that transforms the conflict between Ben Gomes and Prabhakar Raghavan as the "lost hero's" work undone by the "villain". Although a common motif of his recent writing, the article also serves as a broader critique of corporate greed and managerial inefficiency in the tech industry. A message that readers can relate to if they have firsthand experience with Google's downgraded user experience.

The primary argument that Zitron lays out is that under Prabhakar Raghavan and Sundar Pichai, Google has started to prioritize monetization and growth over user experience, leading to the downfall of the search engine's reliability. By contrasting Ben Gomes, the former head of search who led the creation of the search engine we all know and love, against Raghavan, who pushed for the "growth-growth-growth" mindset that has invaded the US private sector, Zitron sets up a captivating story of corporate betrayal. He argues that the decisions made under Raghavan's leadership have rolled back Google Search's integrity by mainly focusing on advertising revenue in order to appease shareholder pressures. He boldly claims that this leadership change was the end of Google's climax, marking the start of its transition from a user centric tool into a corporate interest serving platform.

One of the main strategies that Zitron employs is his appeal to ethos, which he builds by showcasing his investigative journalism. He brings up internal emails from Google that were made public during the Justice Department's antitrust case against the company in order to support his claims with concrete evidence. For instance, he quotes an email from the VP of engineering, Shashi Thakur, that shows that the search team couldn't meet the ever-increasing demands of the ads department exposing the organization's internal friction. He also uses historical data by presenting a timeline of Raghavan's time at Yahoo to point out how the Yahoo's decline mirrors Google's current trajectory. These primary sources assure readers that his conclusions are supported by facts rather than pessimistic speculation.

Additionally, his use of polarizing language to appeal to pathos simplifies the situation's complex corporate dynamics into an easy to understand narrative of heroes and villains. He describes Raghavan as a "management consultant wearing an engineer costume" and a "class traitor" who has betrayed the principles of the tech industry for the sake of profit. This charged language engages the reader's emotions and invites them to view Raghavan as a destroyer of innovation rather than a mere corporate executive, pushing paperwork. On the other hand, Ben Gomes is cast as the antithesis of Raghavan. He's described as a dedicated engineer who was "ratfucked by a series of rotten careerists" after nearly two decades of serving Google's users. This dichotomic framing provokes strong feelings of disappointment and anger toward Google's leadership, making this critique not only intellectually persuasive but also emotionally compelling.

Beyond the details of their decline, Zitron uses the example of Google's leadership change to bring reader's attention to a broader trend in the tech industry: the rise of what he calls the "Rot Economy." He argues that the tech industry is increasingly being driven by short-term

financial gain at the expense of long-term innovation. To support this, he mentions McKinsey's influence on Google through Sundar Pichai's leadership, then further linking it to larger societal problems such as the opioid epidemic and economic inequality. By connecting Google's internal struggles to these widely known issues, he presents his argument as being part of a larger moral and economic failure. This sort of turns his article as a call to action for readers being disillusioned and stepped on by corporate greed.

In *The Man Who Killed Google Search*, Ed Zitron tells a hypnotizing story that blames one man for the decline of the global search engine. Through his appeals to ethos and pathos, along with his broader critique of the tech industry, readers are kept engaged both intellectually and emotionally. The article resonates with a public that is frustrated by the growing influence of corporate interests over technology. He offers a refreshing but sharp critique of the direction the industry is seemingly headed. Ultimately, these rhetorical techniques reinforce his main argument that Google's leadership has sacrificed user experience for profit, leaving behind a search engine that no longer serves the public good.

## References

Zitros, E. (2024, April 23). *The man who killed Google search*. Where's Your Ed At.

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