

## Who will control Alphabet once Sergey Brin and Larry Page are gone

Messrs Brin and Page are retiring from a giant that dominates the search business. Alphabet, as their firm is now known, is the world's fourth-most-valuable listed company. In spite of its *conspicuous* success, they leave it facing uncomfortable questions — about its strategy and who is really in control.

conspicuous 显著的

Silicon Valley has always featured entrepreneurs making giant leaps. Even by those standards Google jumped far, fast. From the start its search engine enjoyed a *virtuous* circle — the more people use it and the more data it collects, the more useful it becomes. The business model, in which advertisers pay to get the attention of users around the world, has printed money. It took Google just eight years to reach \$10bn in annual sales. By comparison, Uber has *incinerated* \$15bn and still loses money.

virtuous 善良的；有效的

incinerate 焚烧；火化

There are uncertainties, however. Take strategy first. Other tech giants have diversified away from their core business. In China Tencent has shifted from video games to a huge array of services. Alphabet has not stood still: it bought YouTube in 2006 and shifted to mobile by launching Android, an operating system, in 2007. But it still makes 85% of its sales from search-advertising.

Another question is who will be in control. Of today's digital giants, two have so far faced succession — Microsoft and Apple. They have prospered partly because their founders or their families did not retain voting control after they left the scene. Alphabet's founders should *forfeit* their special voting rights. Their firm faces deep questions — best to give someone else the freedom to answer them.

forfeit 丧失；被没收