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CS3012 - Software Engineering



Larry Page

Engineer & Entrepreneur

We could define a “significant” software engineer in many ways. Someone who is known throughout the world, or someone who has become extremely wealthy due to their achievements in their career. To me, and a lot of other people - a “significant” software engineer is someone who has impacted the lives of people and the very way they live their day to day lives. In the grand scheme of things, we could maybe count a handful, but if we are to talk about one of the most significant of our time, someone who has impacted billions of people, only a few comes to mind, especially the significant Larry Page.

Early Life & Education

On March 26, 1973 - Larry Page was born. With his parents both having backgrounds in computing, it was no surprise that Larry would eventually follow suit. His father - Carl Page, a pioneer in computer science held a PhD in computer science, while his mother was an instructor in computer programming. From a young age, Page’s interest in computers and technology was very apparent. In an interview he re-called that his house was “usually a mess, with computers and technology or science magazines lying all over the place”. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from the University Of Michigan, Page decided to pursue a computer science PhD degree in Stanford University, where he would meet his future partner, Sergey Brin.

Google

During his Phd at Stanford, Page met fellow researcher Sergey Brin while working on a research project in 1995. By 1996 they had built a search engine, which was originally called 'BackRub'. It operated on Stanford servers for many months. They developed the PageRank algorithm. PageRank relied on a new kind of technology that analysed the relevance of backlinks that connected one web page to another. In simple terms, the search engine listed results according to the popularity of the pages, concluding that the most popular result would almost always be the most useful. This would prove to be the early foundations of Google. Page and Brin decided to incorporate their project as a company. Sun micro-systems co-founder Andy Bechtolsheim played a major role in financing the company as he wrote a check for \$100,000 to the entity that had not even come into existence yet. In 1998, they officially incorporated and their first data centre was set up in the garage of Susan Wojcicki, the first employee hired by Page and Brin. They named the company Google, coming from the word "googol", meaning the number 1 followed by 100 zeros.

Eric Schimt was appointed as CEO in 2001, while Page and Brin became presidents of product and technology, respectively. Over the next decade, Google expanded in a great way and rose as a corporation at a staggering rate. Not only was it the most used search engine and visited website of all time, with over a billion URL's indexed by 2020, they had also ventured into other projects - such as the creation of Gmail and their own web browser, Google Chrome. Many other online tools followed suit, with Google Maps and Drive to name a few. In 2004, Google introduced Google Desktop search and in that same year, held its Initial Public Offering which made Page and Brin millionaires. In 2005 Page led the acquisition of Android for \$50 million, an impactful action by his as Android would have a 81.7% market share by 2017. Page then became CEO in 2011, before leaving the role to Sundar Pichai after he and Brin announced the creation of Alphabet, new parent company that was to oversee

Google and its other subsidiaries. Page and Brin now serve as the company's CEO and president respectively.

Google's impact today

The impact Google has had on society today is nothing short of a phenomenon.

People are more connected today than they ever were, finding information on an endless list of topics is now easier to do than before. Access to billions of pages of data and information in mere seconds was nothing but a dream before Page and Google made that a reality. The mission of Page and Brin was to "organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful". Productivity undoubtedly increased for all those who used the Google search engines, and its products such as the Google Cloud Platform. As a student, I can attest to how much impact Google's products and services has had on my day to day life.

Looking back at Page's career - it is easy to see the effect Google has had on society. From what began as a simple search engine idea is now one of the world's most recognised companies. From allowing products like Google Apps for education to be freely available in third world countries, to almost everybody using Google Maps when travelling in foreign countries or even their native one - it is clear that Google has impacted lives across the globe and is a leader in the industry. It is hard to imagine what life would be like without the founding of Google. Despite all that Page and Google has achieved, he is still at the tender of 44 - and with his hunger to innovate and impact the lives of others, who knows what Google will achieve in the future.

Awards and Commendations

For Larry Page's innovative work and incredible feats Google has impacted today's World, he has been commended by a number of bodies and institutions. The commendations show the scope of the affect his work has had on society. Notable Commendations include:

- Top 100 innovators in the world under 35, MIT Technology Review, 2002.
- Global leader for Tomorrow, World Economic Forum, 2002.
- Prestigious Marconi Foundation Prize, 2004.

References

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