When Google was first hitting it big my dad became very annoyed. He was annoyed because he had read up on how the search algorithm worked. See, he knew that the algorithm looked at what everyone else was clicking and moved those links to the top, a bit of knowledge which has since lead to untold amounts of abuse. What he would say was “just because it more popular doesn’t make it better.” No as a logical statement this is perfectly sound. just because a thing is popular, does *not* make it better. But there are two things that my father had failed to realize. The first is that all of those people you had started to use Google back then had access to all of the other search engines that he has access to, including his favorite, Dogpile. Dogpile is actually a meta search engine, which is to say that it searches other search engines. This is actually a great idea in principle, but in practice leaves something to be desired, since in the results are mostly not what you want, and since it searches Google anyways you usually end up clicking on its link, not always but still.

The second thing, and this is the one that made me want to talk about the subject this morning, is that in many cases something being popular does mean it’s better. Let me elaborate. There are two scientific principles that are essential to this line of thinking, the first is the regression to the mean, which states that the more test samples you have the less extreme the average will be over the course of time. the second principle is the law of large numbers which says that the larger the sample pool is the more precise the average will become. These two closely related principles combined with a fairly new theory called Crowd Wisdom, reveal the true power of Google.

Crowd Wisdom works like this, if you have a large number of level headed individuals, from a diverse set of backgrounds and have them all just guess, their average will be incredibly accurate. The Ideas is the all of the outliers, the high guesses and low guesses will nullify each other leaving only the most accurate guesses. The same principle is in action with the Google search algorithm, they bank on the majority of enquiries will be satisfied by the best available link. It also makes an assumption that is more and more at the heart social values today, that we are all essentially the same. It assumes that if I am interested in a certain website when I make my specific search, that you will be interested in it too.

This level of assumed empathy is incredible, and I think that it is an indication of this to come. I think that the world is really finally coming around the idea that in essence we *are* all equal, that are values, as far as what really important are the same. People are being to see that there are no bad guys, there are no good guys we are all just people trying to do what we think is right.

**And that’s my take on Google and empathy.**