News Item

Tech's Fractal Irresponsibility Problem | The Atlantic

By Alexis C. Madrigal

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It's Thursday, so there's another small scandal in the tech world. Hate groups that Facebook had booted from its platform after the murder of Heather Heyer have slithered back into the blue-and-white universe, *The Guardian* reported. The Southern Poverty Law Center gave an exasperated quote; Facebook forcefully averred, "As organized hate groups, they have no place on our platform." But the weird thing is: Before the *Guardian* reporter Julia Carrie Wong contacted the company—which is worth around $600 billion, has roughly 17,000 employees dedicated to content moderation, and has been talking about working on these problems for two and a half years—the pages were very much on the platform.

It recalled so many other minor tech scandals, any one of which has been written off as an "edge case," as this "mistake," or that "mistake," as an "error," as just "playful," or as a component of an acceptable error rate. There are countless more of these situations, only some of which even rise to newsworthiness. A banned activist here, a person trolled off a platform there, a local business hurt, a small country's news ecosystem thrown into disarray, an image-recognition algorithm labeling black people as gorillas.

[…]

Facebook needs to revise "the metrics we measure" and "the goals." It needs to not ship code more often. It needs to think in new ways "in every process, product, and engineering decision." It needs to make the user experience more honest and respectful, to collect less data, to keep less data. It needs to "listen to people (including internally) when they tell us a feature is creepy or point out a negative impact we are having in the world." It needs to deprioritize growth and change its relationship with its investors. And finally, Stamos wrote, "We need to be willing to pick sides when there are clear moral or humanitarian issues." YouTube (and its parent company, Alphabet), Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Uber, and every other

> tech company could probably build a list that contains many of the same critiques and some others.

Source: [Tech's Fractal Irresponsibility Problem | The Atlantic](#)