

Former Google boss launches scathing Silicon Valley attack urging tech giants to end the delusion that it's making the world a better place

- Google's own former PR chief Jessica Powell called the firm 'deluded' in essay
- She hit out in attack at the web giant, saying the firm 'takes itself too seriously'
- Executive breaks the code of secrecy which surrounds Silicon Valley companies

By [KATHERINE RUSHTON](#), MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY EDITOR FOR THE DAILY MAIL





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A former **Google** boss has launched a withering attack on the firm, calling technology giants deluded.

Jessica Powell said she had become tired of defending the company in her role as its top PR chief.

'This is an industry that takes itself far too seriously, and its own responsibility not seriously enough,' she added.

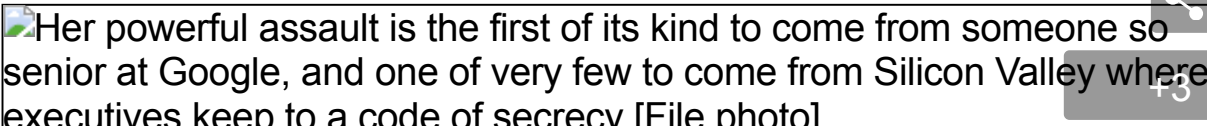
 Jessica Powell, above, said she had become tired of defending the company in her role as its top PR chief. Miss Powell, 40, launched her searing criticism in an essay and satirical novel, both published this week  +3

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'I want Silicon Valley to end the self-delusion and either fess up to the reality we are creating, or live up to the vision we market to the world each day. Because if you're going to tell people you're their saviour, you better be ready to be held to a higher standard.'

Miss Powell, 40, launched her searing criticism in an essay and satirical novel, both published this week, which together paint a damning portrait of the Silicon Valley culture.

She said: 'We go about saying that we're building these amazing things and doing great things for the world but we're also causing a lot of serious problems.'

 Her powerful assault is the first of its kind to come from someone so senior at Google, and one of very few to come from Silicon Valley where executives keep to a code of secrecy [File photo]

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'There is a real problem that we have of black and white thinking – that we lead with data all the time. You say, "Oh well, of two billion users maybe a small percentage of that is bad actors".'

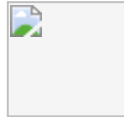
'It's very easy to forget that that's electoral interference, that's live-streamed suicides, that's Myanmar. It's really horrific stuff.'

Her powerful assault is the first of its kind to come from someone so senior at Google, and one of very few to come from Silicon Valley where executives keep to a code of secrecy.

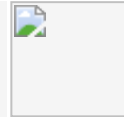
The former journalist, who has three children, said she had been tempted to publish her novel – The Big Disruption – under a pseudonym but felt an obligation to break the silence.

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'At a time when tech is under scrutiny for a number of issues, it's important that those of us who can speak up publicly do so without the comfortable cloak of anonymity,' she said.

Her essay paid tribute to the talented people she worked with at Google and some of the products it has built. But more than a year on from her departure, Miss Powell is scathing about big technology companies.

In one thinly-veiled attack, she accused them of using the sheer size of their platforms as an excuse not to fix problems.

She said: 'You can't go about telling your advertisers that you can target users down to the tiniest pixel, but then throw your hands up in front of the politicians and say your machines can't figure out if bad actors are using your platform.'

Google has been widely criticised for allowing jihadists, far-Right extremists and other hate preachers to post content on its YouTube video platform. In some cases, it funnelled cash from advertisers to the extremists posting videos.

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But the firm has repeatedly told MPs it cannot stop problem content because of the sheer volume of videos that are uploaded to YouTube.

Miss Powell was in charge of the company's response to the criticism, reporting directly to Google's chief executive Sundar Pichai.

Her decision to quit the lucrative role in August last year surprised many in the industry. At the time, Miss Powell claimed she was leaving to go back to university to study creative writing.

However, in her essay, published for free on the Medium website, she admitted she needed to 'take a break from the issues that I got tired of defending at parties'.

She said: 'On the surface, things seemed really important and exciting. We were doing big things! Bringing the internet to the developing world! But also, on some level, it all felt a bit off, like when you go on vacation and find yourself wondering when it's going to feel like the Instagram pics other people have posted.'

Miss Powell also levelled criticism at Amazon and Facebook.