

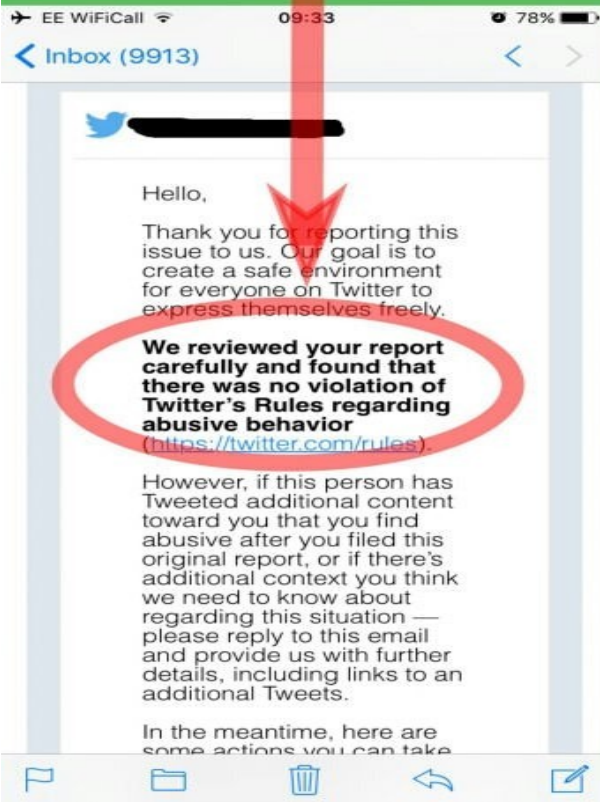


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Google employees confess all the things they hated most about working at Google

- [Jim Edwards, Business Insider](#)
-



Google Roman Boed/Flickr

A job at Google.

It's career heaven, right? How could a gig at the biggest, most ambitious tech company on the planet possibly be bad?

Well, take a look at this Quora thread, which is being constantly updated by [current and former Google employees to dish the dirt](#) on working for the search giant.

Turns out that working at Google isn't all free food and bike rides around campus.

Google Allo released, letting people chat while being watched by its robots

Take their complaints with a grain of salt. These are the complainers, after all. But we've heard many of these same things from our own sources. ↓↓↓

"You are given everything you could ever want, but it costs you the only things that actually matter in the end."



(Google)

Joe Cannella, former senior account manager: "Basically, you end up spending the majority of your life eating Google food, with Google coworkers, wearing Google gear, talking in Google acronyms, sending Google emails on Google phones, and you eventually start to lose sight of what it's like to be independent of the big G, and every corner of your life is set up to reinforce the idea that you would be absolutely insane to want to be anywhere else."

"To which the majority of folks will say 'boo-hoo, poor spoiled Googler'. But that's sort of the point. You are given everything you

could ever want, but it costs you the only things that actually matter in the end."

It's hard to be honest with your colleagues.

Vlad Patryshev, former software engineer: "It is really hard to discuss any issue unless it is your friend you are talking to ... Objective discussions are pretty rare, since everybody's territorial, and not interested in opinions of other people unless those people are Important Gods."

No one believes you if you say it isn't awesome.

Katy Levinson, Former software engineer, Infrastructure: "People feel justified asking you why you left or if you still work there, and insist that everything must be perfect. They don't want to hear anything less than total enthusiasm for your luck getting into Google, and how much you want to stay. If you left or have anything other than rainbows and ponies to talk about, nearly everybody from my mother to my cab driver pretty much demands you explain why you'd be anything less than thrilled to work at Google."

They can hire the very best people — so **everyone is overqualified.**

Anonymous: "There are students from top 10 colleges who are providing tech support for Google's ads products, or manually taking down flagged content from YouTube, or writing basic code to A|B test the color of a button on a site."

Middle management is dangerously political.

Anonymous: "The most obvious areas that this political nature manifests itself is in performance management and recruiting. The amount of horse-trading and manipulation that a manager needs to do to be able to manage their team within the system as it was (I

understand that it's recently changed somewhat) is morale-breaking. To promote someone, you need to start making a case about a year in advance, and because of the curve, that means you can't really give as much credit to other people on your team."

There are too few "bozos."

"There are enough talented people that being talented won't guarantee you an inside track on good projects, because there are thousands of equally smart people ahead in the queue and equally underutilised, but there are just enough bozos that you have to prove that you're not one of them," said a former engineer.

You can work there for eight years and never get a promotion.

Anonymous: "You can fall through the cracks, and you can fall hard. I know people who have been SWE's for 8+ years, still L4, have never been promoted."

Google staff are so outstanding that there's an internal joke about it.

Anonymous: "I used to joke with my colleagues that Larry & Sergey go out on their yachts — tie them together, sit back on the same recliners you'll find on their jumbo jet, each on his own yacht/set of yachts, smoke cigars, and put up pictures of Googlers with little snippets like 'was a GM at multi-national telecomm company, got a Harvard MBA and is now answering Orkut tickets.' and then they would erupt in laughter and clink their cigars & Scotch together in celebration. This, of course, is highly unlikely given neither of them would ever smoke a cigar or drink Scotch. Remainder is plausible."

Google is so big it can hire you by mistake.



(John MacDougal/AFP/Getty)

Anonymous: "I was approached by Google to take on a management position. At the same time I was hired, another person with the same name was hired. Somewhere, HR got things horribly mixed up and when I started I was in a very different, very junior position instead which would have been appropriate for the other candidate of the same name. The employment contract was ambiguous and the relevant HR staff had long since left to work for another company so no-one could clear it up."

"Ultimately Google paid for my household belongings to be shipped across the world and then immediately back home again for no good reason other than "this does not compute, error, error, error".

The company only cares about measurable improvements.

Katy Levinson: "Any improvement not based on a hard metric was flatly not a respected use of time," said a former Google software engineer. "Usability? Number of bugs? Nobody cared. If you couldn't measure it, nobody was interested in it."

Many startups run circles around Google because they break the law.

Sean Gerrish, Former Software Engineer: "Google must tread carefully in order to avoid litigation. In general, Google cannot do things like violate copyright laws without immediate, significant effects. This is exacerbated because governments' laws will change to affect Google itself."

"In contrast, many startups can run circles around Google, not because they are better at execution (although some of them are better at execution), but because they can often get quite far by flouting regulations or civil actions before being discovered."

Projects get cancelled arbitrarily all the time.

Anonymous: "The biggest negative, by far, for me has been seemingly arbitrary project cancellations," said an anonymous commenter. "To add insult to injury, people who worked on canceled projects have promotion applications denied for failing to have made an impact."

"In the Bay Area the cost of living is insane."

Adrian Carballo, former Software Engineer: "In the Bay Area the cost of living is insane, and if you work off of the MTV campus there isn't even that much to do other than working or hanging out with your coworkers. Lame. You do have free food available all the time, and many cafes, gyms, laundry rooms, etc. but over time as you start using all these perks (because it's just too convenient) you spend more and more of your time at the office. You start making the same choices day in and day out. You hang out more and more with the same people you work with."

"I ended up deciding it was time to move on to more freedom. ... even if I have to pay for it."

"PS. I'm also leaving the Bay Area really soon."

"There is a layer of intelligent individuals who are horrible managers and leaders."

"People are promoted into management positions — not because they actually know how to lead/manage, but because they happen to be smart or because there is no other path to grow into," said a former technical program manager. "So there is a layer of intelligent individuals who are horrible managers and leaders."

"Jealous friends who hate on your job because they didn't get in."

Anonymous: "The spotlight. Quora questions, jealous friends who hate on your job because they didn't get in, suspicious media articles claiming every move by the company ties into some centralised advertising master plan, etc. This gets old. Nobody will just let you have your job."

"I met 100 triathletes in my three years at Google. Only a handful of them were interesting people."

"They hire the same person over and over again," **said an anonymous commenter.** "Same background, same 10 schools, same worldview, same interests. It's no exaggeration to say that I met 100 triathletes in my three years at Google. Only a handful of them were interesting people."

"The worst part of working at Google ... [was] feeling under-utilised."

John L. Miller, former Staff Software Engineer: "The worst part of working at Google for me was, as for many others, feeling under-utilised. As someone with ~25 years of programming, management, and architecture experience, I wasn't doing anything that a good college hire with ~2 years of experience couldn't do faster and just as well. That's a depressing situation."

"Get EVERYTHING in writing."

"If you are in the process of gaining employment with Google, negotiate hard, be demanding, and make sure to get EVERYTHING in writing. Google makes lots of vague promises, and seems to not deliver."

Don't believe the hype.

Jeff Nelson, invented Google Chrome: "A very large fraction of what you hear about Google - from outside Google - is bullshit. Often, this bullshit is propagated by Googlers, because it helps the company's reputation. When someone comes up with a really good piece of bullshit, they may even earn some respect among the other Google engineers. It's considered 'Googley' to make Google sound like an amazing place to work, even if the statement is largely bullshit."

Not working at HQ is "career suicide."



Brandon lives in this 2006 Ford, which cost him \$10,000 (Brandon)

Anonymous: "Obviously one can always opt to work at remote offices, but that is a career suicide longterm-wise."

Your office space can be too small.

Anne K. Halsall, product designer: "[I]f you have to work in one of the four main campus buildings, you will most likely be extremely cramped. It's not uncommon to see 3-4 employees in a single cube, or several managers sharing an office. With all the open areas for food, games, TV, tech talks, etc, it can be surprisingly hard to find a quiet, private place to think."

Google is so big you can't have any impact on it.

"I worked at Google for 3 years and it was very difficult to leave but there was one major factor that helped me make the decision — the impact I could ever have on the business as an individual was minimal. As noted in many answers below, Google is an incredible machine that prints money thanks to AdWords. Unless you are an amazingly talented engineer who gets to create something new, chances are you're simply a guy/girl with an oil can greasing the cogs of that machine."

Middle management is mediocre.

"I'd say the relentless daily mediocre thinking of middle management types who are completely focused on metrics to the exclusion of all other factors. They don't want to rock the boat, they don't know how to inspire their workforce, and they rely far too much on the Google name and reputation to do that for them."

Googlers can get caught up in trivia.

"In Zurich there is a quiet room where people go to relax, or take a nap. There are very nice looking fish tanks there and you can waste as much of your work time there, watching the fish do fishy things. There was a 100+ emails thread about removing the massage chairs from that room because some people allegedly were being kept from sleeping because the massage chairs were too noisy."

The culture is immature.

"It's like never-never land — people never grow up. They drink at all hours, socialize constantly, play games, and do little to no work."

You can't work remotely.

Dimitar Bojantchev, freelance: "The killer to me was the inability to work remotely, which I have been doing successfully for the past 5-6 years."

Staff are rewarded for dreaming up new things even when new things aren't needed.

Katy Levinson: "This led to imaginative unmaintained nightmares, frequently based on discarded shells of other platforms nobody maintained. We had four internal-only official JavaScript libraries. Why? Because writing an innovative JavaScript library could get you a promotion!"

"I was genuinely out of my league."

Paul Buttery, senior product analyst: "My first week was more intimidating than anticipated. I fell for what's commonly referred to as imposter syndrome. The members of my new team were insanely smart and accomplished. Not 'I got straight A's in college' smart. More like 'I created Google Maps and published a dozen patents before I was of legal drinking age' smart."

"Most had worked with Sebastian Thrun (self-driving cars, Udacity) at Stanford or on Maps. How was I going to provide value here? In hindsight, I was genuinely out of my league."

"Stepford engineers."

Nathan Yospe, former engineer: "The engineers Google hires fit the mold of generalist system types. They are good at algorithms, database concepts, transaction processing, scaling, etc. They

generally do not have domain expertise in product areas. The culture rewards engineers who solve knotty technical problems and leaves behind those who enjoy the harder part of product development, moving a product from version 1 to a truly great version 3 by smoothing out the rough edges and adding functionality based on customer feedback, and by maintaining and debugging a product."

Bad managers can make a career there.

Nathan Yospe: "I worked at one of the larger non-MV campuses, and the only intellectual stimulation I encountered in my time there was the interview process. Not that I met that many brilliant people, but I did meet a lot of fairly mediocre people that were convinced they were brilliant, and I saw a lot of political ass kissing. I worked under a team lead who hadn't touched code in over two years, and had been incompetent as a programmer when she was one, with a tech lead who was okay at UX, but not much else."