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### Is 'Sicko' Post a Chink in Google's Armor?

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"Does negative press make you Sicko?" That's the title of Google (Nasdaq: GOOG) Latest News about Google ad rep Lauren Turner's post in a new company blog for the healthcare Latest News about healthcare industry. "Sicko" is a reference to Michael Moore's latest documentary, now out in theaters, which examines access to healthcare in the U.S.

Given that the readers Turner is targeting are affiliated with the very companies Moore is attacking, it is not surprising that her post is sympathetic to their position.

"Moore attacks health insurers, health providers, and pharmaceutical companies by connecting them to isolated and emotional stories of the system Manage remotely with one interface -- the HP ProLiant DL360 G5 server. at its worst," she says. "Moore's film portrays the industry as money- and marketing-driven, and fails to show healthcare's interest in patient well-being and care."

It's Turner's next statement, though, that's responsible for fomenting the Moore-like controversy.

One possible solution, she suggests, would be for healthcare providers to advertise -- using Google's AdWords to place their messages next to movie reviews or other related subjects.

"We can place text ads, video ads and rich media ads in paid search results or in relevant Web sites within our ever-expanding content network," Turner offers. "Whatever the problem, Google can act as a platform for educating the public and promoting your message."

### **Whose Blog Is It?**

It didn't take long for the blogosphere to heat up. Some bloggers were irate that Google would use an official blog to oppose what is, at bottom, Moore's political message. Others were taken aback by Google's naked support of its own business interests.

So much for "Don't Be Evil" was the sentiment of many bloggers, a cynical reference to Google's motto in the early days. Turner eventually softened her position, noting that the opinions were her own, not Google's -- even though she was using a corporate blog to express them.

### **It's Just Business**

The controversy still rankles a bit, days after Turner's initial post appeared, both in the blogosphere and among Google's legions of advertisers. Could this event mark the tipping point where Google officially loses its cool, upstart image because Turner supposedly violated some unspoken or unwritten rule of fair play? Or are Google users just unhappy over the search giant's overt display of how it actually makes its sausage?

The business community seems to think it's the latter. Indeed, many are surprised to find that Google's die-hard fans apparently don't realize that Google is, well, a for-profit entity.

Turner was simply stating the obvious and using her blog to drum up more business for Google, Fard Johnmar, founder of Envision Solutions, told the E-Commerce Times.

"Despite people's outrage, Google first and foremost is a business. Its goal is to make a profit. The company regularly meets with executives from throughout the healthcare industry who are looking to advertise on Google's properties about a range of products, services and issues," he said.

People within Google have different opinions about a range of subjects, he has found. "When it comes to making money, however, they will take it from whomever comes calling."

If Moore can use documentaries to make a profit, then healthcare companies should be able to use their resources to advertise a counterpoint, Sherwood Stranieri, director of search marketing Email Marketing Software - Free Demo for the search engine marketing firm Catalyst Online, told the E-Commerce Times.

"That said, I'd caution healthcare clients to be careful with their messaging, to avoid the kind of backlash that spreads like wildfire in the blog world," he added.

"Having spent a lot of years working with ad sales reps and their managers, I suggest there's likely little more here than tactical opportunism from a vertical market sales team," said Greg Brooks, principal at West Third Group.

"Big Health has money, and the sales team sees a way to separate them from some of it by playing to their concerns," he told the E-Commerce Times. "It's hard to see this as anything more sinister than that."

It's about time people realized, Google is big business, echoed Kevin Stirtz, author of Marketing for Smart People. "They are now a member of corporate America, whether some bloggers like it or not," he told the E-Commerce Times. "Google can't ignore big corporate advertisers without ignoring their bottom line."

### **Of Bullies and Serving One Master**

That said, Google's bottom line, in large part, has to do with its street cred. In other words, it may act like a big business, but it doesn't necessarily want to look like one. The current uproar -- as silly as it may seem in the eyes of some in the business community -- could have a negative impact on Google.

"Google is making a very tricky transition from a relatively young company to an established company, Jeffrey Johnson, partner at Pryor Cashman, told the E-Commerce Times.

"This transition is risky: If they do not handle the transition well, Google may go from being perceived as an "upstart" company with cutting-edge technology that helped bring Microsoft (Nasdaq: MSFT) Latest News about Microsoft and other corporate bullies down to earth, to a bully that is no better than Microsoft," he remarked.

On the other hand, if Google does it right, "it may be perceived as the first company since Apple (Nasdaq: AAPL) Latest News about Apple to make the transition to corporate "adulthood" while remaining faithful to its roots."

The "Sicko" blog posting, he said, no doubt raises or confirms the fears of many bloggers that Google is drifting to the dark side.

"Certainly, the rep's advice pushed the limits of an unspoken code among bloggers: i.e., that you don't bully, and you don't help bullies. I think that's exactly what's going on here. By posting an entry that was targeted to helping the healthcare industry, Google's ad rep is perceived by many bloggers to have come to the aid of the enemy -- the Health

Insurance and Big Pharma bullies -- to the detriment of the little guy -- Michael Moore and the everyman he represents."

There might something to that theory, commented Petri R.J. Darby, president of darbyDarnit Public Relations.

"Branding purists would say that a truly successful company can only have one master," he said. "But so far, Google is successfully navigating the fine line between the grassroots individual and corporate America."