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Search Risk – How Google Almost Killed ProtonMail

Posted on [October 26, 2016](#) by [Andy Yen](#)



In the past two months, many of you have reached out to us to ask about the [mysterious tweets we sent to Google in August](#). At ProtonMail, transparency is a core value, and we try to be as transparent with our community as possible. As many people have continued to point out to us, we need to be more transparent here to avoid continued confusion and speculation. Thus, we are telling the full story today to clarify what happened.

What Happened?

The short summary is that for nearly a year, Google was hiding ProtonMail from search results for queries such as 'secure email' and 'encrypted email'. This was highly suspicious because ProtonMail has long been the world's largest encrypted email provider.

When ProtonMail launched in Beta back in May 2014, our community rapidly grew as people from around the world came together and supported us in our mission to protect privacy in the digital age. Our [record breaking crowdfunding campaign](#) raised over half a million dollars from contributors and provided us with the resources to make ProtonMail competitive against even the biggest players in the email space.

By the summer of 2015, ProtonMail passed [half a million users](#) and was the world's most well known secure email

service. ProtonMail was also ranking well in Google search at this time, on the first or second page of most queries including “encrypted email” and “secure email”. However, by the end of October 2015, the situation had changed dramatically, and ProtonMail was mysteriously no longer showing up for searches of our two main keywords.

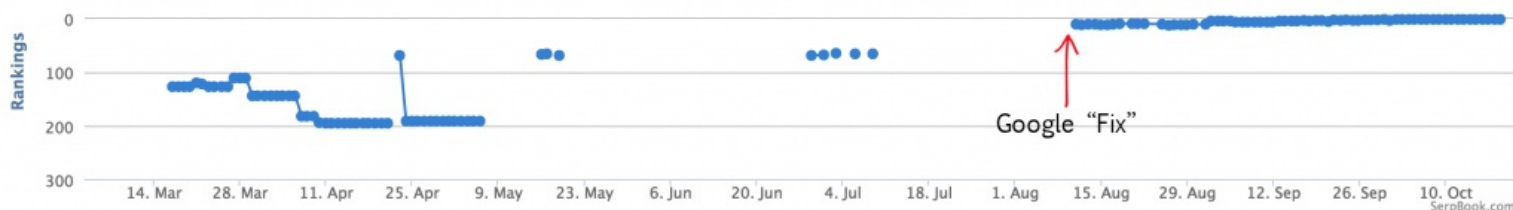
Between the beginning of the summer and the fall of 2015, ProtonMail did undergo a lot of changes. We released ProtonMail 2.0, [we went fully open source](#), we launched mobile apps in beta, and we updated our website, changing our TLD from .ch to the more widely known .com. We also doubled in size, growing to nearly 1 million users by the fall. All of these changes should have helped ProtonMail’s search rankings as we became more and more relevant to more people.

In November 2015, we became aware of the problem and consulted a number of well known SEO experts. None of them could explain the issue, especially since ProtonMail has never used any blackhat SEO tactics, nor did we observe any used against us. Mysteriously, the issue was entirely limited to Google, as this anomaly was not seen on any other search engine. Below are the search rankings for ProtonMail for ‘secure email’ and ‘encrypted email’ taken at the beginning of August 2016 across all major search engines. We rank on either page 1 or 2 everywhere except Google where we are not ranked at all.

	Yahoo!	Bing	Yandex	DuckDuckGo	Baidu	Google
secure email	6	4	6	5	15	-
encrypted email	11	14	4	11	9	-

All throughout Spring 2016, we worked in earnest to get in touch with Google. We created two tickets on their web spam report form explaining the situation. We even contacted Google’s President EMEA Strategic Relationships, but received no response nor improvement. Around this time, we also heard about the anti-trust action [brought forward by the European Commission against Google](#), accusing Google of abusing its search monopoly to [lower the search rankings of Google competitors](#). This was worrying news, because as an email service that puts user privacy first, we are the leading alternative to Gmail for those looking for better data privacy.

In August, with no other options, we turned to Twitter to press our case. This time though, [we finally got a response](#), thanks in large part to the hundreds of ProtonMail users who drew attention to the issue and made it impossible to ignore. After a few days, Google informed us that they had “fixed something” without providing further details. The results could be immediately seen.



ProtonMail Google Search Ranking for “Encrypted Email”

In the above plots, the x-axis is time and the y-axis is search ranking (lower number is better). The dates where there are no data points are times when we are not ranked at all by Google. After Google made some changes, ProtonMail’s rankings immediately recovered and are now ranked #1 and #3 for ‘secure email’ and ‘encrypted email’ respectively. Without any additional explanation from Google, we may never know why ProtonMail become unranked. In any case, we do appreciate Google finally taking action to resolve the issue, we just wished it happened sooner.

The Danger of Search Risk

This incident however highlights a previously unrecognized danger that we are now calling Search Risk. **The danger is that any service such as ProtonMail can easily be suppressed by either search companies, or the governments that control those search companies.** This can happen even across national borders. For example, even though Google is an American company, it controls [over 90% of European search traffic](#). In this case, **Google directly caused ProtonMail’s growth rate worldwide to be reduced by over 25% for over 10 months.**

This meant that ProtonMail’s income from users was also cut by 25%, putting financial pressure on our operations. We went from being able to cover all our monthly expenses to having to draw from our emergency reserve fund. The lost income and financial damage incurred as a result was several hundred thousand Swiss Francs (1 CHF = 1.01 USD), which will never be reimbursed.

The only reason we survived to tell this story is because the majority of ProtonMail’s growth comes from word of mouth, and our community is too loud to be ignored. Many other companies won’t be so fortunate. This episode illustrates that Search Risk is serious, which is why we now agree with the European Commission that given Google’s dominant position in search, more transparency and oversight is critical.

Defending Against Search Risk

This incident illustrates that for ProtonMail to be successful, it is important that we can continue to grow

independently of search engines so that it is impossible for any search company to intentionally or unintentionally cripple us. This is easier said than done, but there are easy actions that we can all do to safeguard the future of ProtonMail:

- Tell your friends and family about ProtonMail. The other benefit of this is that you will also get automatic end-to-end encryption when you email them.
- Writing articles or blog posts about ProtonMail and help spread the word about online privacy.
- [Upgrading to a paid account](#) or [donating](#) so we can rebuild our depleted emergency reserve fund faster.
- Helping ProtonMail reach more people through social media. You can Tweet or share ProtonMail on Facebook with the share buttons below.

[🐦 Share on Twitter](#) [f Share on Facebook](#)

The more we get the word out about the importance of online privacy, the more we make it impossible to suppress, ban, or otherwise pressure encrypted email services such as ProtonMail. We believe online privacy is critical for an open, democratic, and free future, and regardless of the obstacles ahead of us, we will continue building the tools necessary to protect this future. Thank you for supporting us and making this possible.

Best Regards,
The ProtonMail Team

For questions and comment, you can reach us at media@protonmail.ch.

You can get a free secure email account from ProtonMail [here](#).

ProtonMail is supported by community contributions. We don't serve ads or abuse your privacy. You can support our mission by [upgrading to a paid plan](#) or [donating](#).

Image Credit: Special thanks to [Glasgow graphics designer James Belkevitz](#) for providing the top image.

[g+](#) [reddit](#) [f](#) [envelope](#) [twitter](#) [Get an Encrypted Email Account](#) Share This!

About the Author



Andy Yen

Andy is the Co-Founder of ProtonMail. He is a long time advocate of privacy rights and has spoken around the world about online privacy issues. Previously, Andy was a research scientist at CERN and has a PhD in Particle Physics from Harvard University. You can watch his TED talk online to learn more about ProtonMail's mission.

Learn More

[What Yahoo's NSA Surveillance Means for Email Privacy](#)

October 6, 2016 in [Privacy](#)

Updated October 7, 2016 with additional clarification and analysis of Yahoo's denial Dear ProtonMail Community, Two weeks ago, we published a security advisory regarding the mass hacking of...

[**The ProtonMail Mobile Apps are about to get even better!**](#)

April 22, 2016 in [Articles & News](#)

It's official, ProtonMail is now the highest rated email app! Since we launched ProtonMail's iOS and Android apps a month ago, we have had an amazing reception from...

[**We have launched support for custom domains and paid accounts!**](#)

February 26, 2016 in [Articles & News](#)

We have now released ProtonMail version 3.1 to all users. This is a major update which brings numerous new features to ProtonMail. For the first time, you can...

[**ProtonMail Security Advisory Regarding Yahoo Hack**](#)

September 23, 2016 in [Security](#)

Confirming what was long suspected by the security community, Yahoo today confirmed a massive breach of over 500 million email accounts, including both credentials and security questions. This...

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Name

Email

Website

Post Comment

72 comments on "Search Risk - How Google Almost Killed

ProtonMail”

Martin, [October 26, 2016 at 5:50 PM](#)

and why you are supporting Google+ here on protonmail?

[↩ Reply](#)

Reuben Moore, [October 26, 2016 at 5:57 PM](#)

Contrary to what the European Commission may believe, I doubt that Google deleted ProtonMail for anti-competitive reasons. I mean, seriously, to Google, you are a gnat compared to the behemoth that is Gmail. Rather, I suspect the influence of the US and other governments trying to curtail the use of secure and encrypted email among us mere citizens.

[↩ Reply](#)

JL, [October 27, 2016 at 12:10 PM](#)

I agree with this hypothesis.

[↩ Reply](#)

Claude, [October 27, 2016 at 2:59 PM](#)

Indeed. Gmail has one billion users, Protonmail a million or so. This is most likely the US Gov telling Google how to filter. Moreover, it is dead certain that if the keyword “protonmail” pops up in an email you send or receive on Gmail, a copy of it goes straight to Fort Meade (NSA).

[↩ Reply](#)

T Ming, [November 2, 2016 at 1:38 AM](#)

and there was a time when Google was a Gnat and had only a 100,000 users ...

ProtonMail is a competitive threat for Google as more and more revelations about their ‘enhancements’ keep coming out -such as the deletion of the privacy controls that were a core promise when google launched.

Have a look at what M\$ did to Apple (GUI anyone?) and the other operating systems, word processing programs, spreadsheet competitors who curiously seemed to suffer the BSOD after certain ‘critical’ updates.

Of course none of it was intentional....

Seen the Tooth Fairy recently?

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [October 26, 2016 at 6:15 PM](#)

So, ProtonMail's still fully alive, safe & secure with no negative impact of any kind then from Google or otherwise like other Search Engines, etc.??

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, [October 26, 2016 at 7:19 PM](#)

Yes, Google fixed the problem so our revenue stream is safe again and we are steadily building up our emergency reserve fund again. Thank you for your support!

[↩ Reply](#)

Limon Monte, [October 26, 2016 at 6:47 PM](#)

Very important article, thank you @Andy.

I translated this into Russian for the most popular IT blog, with mentioning of source and link to this blog of course: <https://geektimes.ru/post/281908/>

[↩ Reply](#)

Claude, [October 26, 2016 at 7:14 PM](#)

Thank you Andy & Protonmail. Looks like, after having firmly established Protonmail, your next project is going to be setting up a new search engine. ProtonSearch.

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [October 26, 2016 at 11:20 PM](#)

I'd get behind that

[↩ Reply](#)

Austin, [October 27, 2016 at 12:04 AM](#)

[DuckDuckGo](#) (Search Engine) and [ProtonMail](#) cover all my bases. You should try it too.

[↩ Reply](#)

Kimberly, [November 23, 2016 at 1:37 PM](#)

I'm one of those word of mouth users you wrote about. I've worked in computers all my life and after getting into Cisco, Linux, and done other things about a year ago, I started craving ↓ on myself more than I did before (and my son used to call me paranoid before lol). Thanks to a friend I learned of protonmail and also sobering that happened recently that is forcing me to

search for a new vpn. Good thing I don't pay two to three years in advance to save a few bucks. Anyway, I didn't see it mentioned in the comments but I have used Startpage.com as well as duck duck go for some time and love it. I have also been researching and collecting data on all the security breaches that have been going on since the begging of the year (yes, some were from many years earlier and we just found out this year) and I'm doing a write up for my company blog over Internet security and privacy. The government and hackers, and then another with all the innumerable different things you can do to start protecting yourself and I intend on using protonmail in it now that I've been using it. I hope that's OK. 😊 It will actually be posted on two or three blogs and in a couple of political fb groups.

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, [November 24, 2016 at 2:09 PM](#)

Thanks a lot for your support!

[↩ Reply](#)

Philippe, [November 2, 2016 at 1:20 PM](#)

Have you tried Qwant? European, dedicated to preserving your privacy. Not as slick as Google, but improving all the time.

[↩ Reply](#)

anonymous, [October 27, 2016 at 1:37 AM](#)

>>Google was hiding ProtonMail from search results for queries such as 'secure email'
are you sure about that?
<http://www.imgur.com/yZEbm>

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, [October 27, 2016 at 3:39 AM](#)

Read the rest of the blog post. The problem is fixed now, but for 10 months we were not visible.

[↩ Reply](#)

anonymous, [October 27, 2016 at 7:46 AM](#)

sorry, my bad

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [October 27, 2016 at 8:36 PM](#)

Takes the time google 'secure email,' upload it, and comment that the blog post

is wrong

Unwilling to read more than the first few sentences before trying to disprove the article...

I bet you're fun at parties

[↩ Reply](#)

Stefano, [November 2, 2016 at 12:47 AM](#)

He/She will actually fit right in at most parties... the pattern of reading the first sentence, or even just the title, and spewing uninformed comments is ever so common.

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [October 27, 2016 at 3:46 AM](#)

So then, chance of an F-droid release for the Android app is looking pretty good...? -Ish?

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, [October 27, 2016 at 10:38 AM](#)

Better every day. It's on the somewhat lengthy to do list.

[↩ Reply](#)

Aam, [November 8, 2016 at 11:53 PM](#)

Happy to pay - great service. An apk will be much-appreciated too.

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [October 27, 2016 at 7:30 AM](#)

As a new user that join during the dark age, I'm glad I found ProtonMail via Wikipedia searching for alternate mail after Yahoo sold itself.

[↩ Reply](#)

Andreas, [October 27, 2016 at 9:22 AM](#)

We are one of those "other companies" mentioned above. We operate in a completely different industry (we are a Chinese Language School in China), however pretty much the same thing has happened to our website. We were number in the top three for main key words like "Learn Chinese in China" for years and from November 2015 google started down ranking us and has continued to doing so for 10 month by now until we are now

invisible. We hadn't made any significant changes to our site or business nor did our user behaviour change during that time. It was not one drop after a change in the search algorithm or after something technical that might have happened, but is a continuous decline for almost a year now that is impossible to stop. We also spoke to many SEO experts and after a lot of analyses etc. were told the website is fine, as are the link profile, no black hat techniques had been employed and everything is great. Just every week we continue falling further. There is no way to talk to google about this and I do not know how we could get them to "fix" whatever is going wrong in the search right now for a company like us that unfortunately lacks such a vocal online user base.

When an error by one company has the power to so severely affect the business of other companies, without any need for transparency, explanations or third party checking, then indeed the European Anti Trust commission needs to do something about this.

[↩ Reply](#)

Frank, [October 27, 2016 at 4:34 PM](#)

Not defending Google, but I see two things that will lower your sites ranking.

1) I'm sitting on a 100Mbps fiber connection, but the initial response of your website responds is very slow. Loads OK when it starts to load, but says "Waiting for <http://www.livethelanguage.cn>" for a long time. This tested in Edge, Firefox and Chrome on Win10.

2) The server is running HTTP, not HTTPS. Google is actively ranking down sites not using HTTPS.

Hope you're getting your rankings up again.

[↩ Reply](#)

Digital, [October 31, 2016 at 9:09 AM](#)

These seo factors you mentioned couldn't explain, why Protonmail was completely out of G results.

Usually it's because of penalty due to duplicate content or other serious issues. Maybe in this case it's really because of evil G 😊

[↩ Reply](#)

John, [November 2, 2016 at 2:51 AM](#)

Hi Fran,

Just wanted to clear up any misconceptions. - as SEO can be a tricky space.

There is no 'ranking down' of websites with the HTTPS announcement.

Purely that pages (not websites) will experience a small boost once it's properly migrated to HTTPS. To be honest I've seen this go wrong more times than it goes right (due to issues migrating between HTTP & HTTPS).

More details here: <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2014/08/https-as-ranking-signal.html>

Hope that helps!

[↩ Reply](#)

Kougee, [October 28, 2016 at 9:58 PM](#)

At least from Europe your website loads very very slowly. There are many solutions to this, and most are comparably inexpensive. (CDN?) Not saying that this is or was the problem but if you were looking so hard for reasons why Google might decrease your rank, this could certainly be one of them. Your website should load fast everywhere if possible (and having it completely over HTTPS also helps with ranking).

[↩ Reply](#)

Mark, [October 27, 2016 at 4:09 PM](#)

This issue is one of the reasons I created the site covertactions.com. I thought we needed a site that lists the encrypted apps available world wide. We do press releases almost monthly and we spend on SEO to get written up in blogs all over the net. This way we don't need to appear in Google which we don't yet anyway. The site lets you search on Type of product, cost, country, open source or not, and wildcard. We just launched 7 months ago and have over 720 encrypted products listed with many more to go and since new apps are released almost everyday it will just get larger. We also use ProtonMail as a our domain mail provider.

[↩ Reply](#)

Lee Colbran, [October 27, 2016 at 5:29 PM](#)

In all fairness, if a business model relies on Google organic for growth, then, the business model is wrong. Any organisation that places faith in an entity where there is no control has an unnatural imbalance within its marketing strategy. Of course, any organisation wants 'free' organic traffic. That said, there are many other ways to reach the audience.

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [October 27, 2016 at 6:22 PM](#)

I'm sorry your competitor did not give you free advertising. Please be sure to write more blogs where you're the clickbait victim. I hear that's good for SEO.

[↩ Reply](#)

MunKy, [November 2, 2016 at 10:33 PM](#)

Either you misunderstood the entire article or misunderstood what they mean by “competitor”

Also, Google is a search engine, its not advertising.

[↩ Reply](#)

Kimberly, [November 23, 2016 at 1:42 PM](#)

Gotta love trolls sigh.

[↩ Reply](#)

Jane Peters, [October 27, 2016 at 7:14 PM](#)

Yes a Proton search engine would be nice.

[↩ Reply](#)

Philippe, [November 2, 2016 at 1:21 PM](#)

In the meantime, have a look at Qwant

[↩ Reply](#)

Anon, [October 27, 2016 at 10:53 PM](#)

You need to offer an apk download that is free from google play services, friends.

[↩ Reply](#)

Patryk, [October 28, 2016 at 12:08 AM](#)

Are you planning to release a Windows Mobile app?

[↩ Reply](#)

James Pate, [October 28, 2016 at 12:27 AM](#)

From a quick glance at your dropped links and checking out earlier versions of your site it looks like the drop in ranking near October 2015 was because of a combination of url changes during redesigns/tld migration and missing key redirects from old pages that had links going to them. This along with missing canonicals makes many of the old links going to your site not count anymore because they go to 404s which drops your ranking. Sounds like whatever SEOs you consulted just looked at your backlinks.

[↩ Reply](#)

For me what makes this case interesting is:

Where sites are affected by algorithmic penalties, Google often does not notify those sites. It is possible a mistaken algorithmic penalty has affected ProtonMail.

Unlike a manual penalty which is a human decision taken on your site, algorithmic penalties are hard to define. It's not as clear cut in a legal sense whether it's strictly a penalty. All you can say is that an algorithmic change has affected you.

Now where it becomes most interesting is that Google said they "fixed something". Does that imply they were at fault? With that are they now liable for losses?

The other interesting point is that there is a level of AI involved AKA RankBrain in search ranking. That also raises a new question as presumably Google don't exactly know how the AI is affecting rankings at the granular level of every single site on the web. So who is liable? Can you prove intentional harm? Do you need to?

OFF TOPIC: On the separate issue of open sourcing the Google algorithm so it can be audited. It's an excellent idea, but I think we are so far off a search algorithm that if made public could not be gamed, so it's quite impractical. Perhaps with more AI this would be possible who knows.

[↩ Reply](#)

kz, [November 1, 2016 at 3:43 AM](#)

Why would Google be liable for anything ? Google is not forcing anyone to rely/subscribe to their services.

Google and Protonmail have no agreement or contract whatsoever. Despite what the EU commission and other companies or individuals say, Google has a right to operate its own business as they see fit and that includes the right to apply whatever filters or ranking methods they want. And if people are not happy with that, there are always companies like Protonmail that offer alternative solutions.

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [November 15, 2016 at 6:31 PM](#)

"Despite what the EU commission and other companies or individuals say, Google has a right to operate its own business as they see fit" In fact no, that's wrong.

When you control the majority of the market, you are not allowed to use this competitive advantage to gain another market or to eliminate a competitor. That's not only true for Google, and not only in Europe, but also in Telecommunications, Energy, Railway and those laws also exist in the US and

everywhere else, it's the notion of "antitrust".

[↩ Reply](#)

Kimberly, [November 23, 2016 at 1:50 PM](#)

I fail to see where this is a relevant comment when in this context Google is a search engine and protonmail a secure email provider, yet you speak of Google's right to filter and rank his they want and follow up with "if people don't like it there are other services such as protonmail they can use" (paraphrase). No. As far as I know protonmail is not a search engine.

[↩ Reply](#)

DebSec, [October 28, 2016 at 1:40 AM](#)

The lack of Google analytic's and changing of the TLD is what mostly caused this I suspect. **I fully agree on not adding the spying scripts** but it is very intertwined with there robots and could of corrected the situation. As I see it you submitted the site under one TLD and then submitted another with no directions for there bots. This all had to be updated manually by a tech.

Your robots.txt could be updated.

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6062608?hl=en>

[↩ Reply](#)

DebSec, [October 28, 2016 at 1:57 AM](#)

OFF TOPIC

I also see some users like DuckDuckGo. Awhile back I created or modified a search plugin for the Mycroft Project using DuckDuckGo.

It uses Post rather than get (safer)

No filters or Ads

Opens results in a new tab or window depending on your browser settings.

Dark theme was my preference.

My plugin: <http://mycroftproject.com/search-engines.html?author=DebSec>

Various DuckDuckGo plugins: <http://mycroftproject.com/search-engines.html?name=duckduckgo>

[↩ Reply](#)

GucciPiggy, [October 28, 2016 at 2:11 AM](#)

And yet when I Google "secure email", ProtonMail is the first result.

[↩ Reply](#)

[Admin](#), [October 28, 2016 at 2:14 AM](#)

You should read the whole article.

[↩ Reply](#)

[Vladimir Dzhuvinov](#), [October 28, 2016 at 8:39 AM](#)

So much for search engine “neutrality” 😊

[↩ Reply](#)

[Toto](#), [October 28, 2016 at 9:12 AM](#)

Stopping using Google. I already did, years ago.

Perhaps you should start promoting alternative search engines.

Cheers.

[↩ Reply](#)

[Lisa](#), [October 28, 2016 at 9:55 PM](#)

To the Google Team-

Was it worth it to lose your credibility? This will forever stand as an example of your deceitful conduct against internet users. Other tech firms should take note. You'll be caught. It's not worth it.

One more thing. If you're on the inside of Google, and you know of these schemes, LEAK it. SecureDrop, ProtonMail and Wikileaks are all safe and easy.

If you are employed in tech, personally encourage all Google employees to leak these wrongful actions.

Thanks,
L.

[↩ Reply](#)

[Tom](#), [October 29, 2016 at 1:21 AM](#)

Did any search engines list ProtonMail during this time?

[↩ Reply](#)

[Admin](#), [October 29, 2016 at 1:42 AM](#)

Yes, all of them except Google. This is discussed in the blog post above.

[↩ Reply](#)

r3dglove, [October 29, 2016 at 3:46 PM](#)

Amazing service.. protecting privacy ... yes... agree.

Em... what about malicious activity?

This service can be used for spam too, right?!

Well... any service has the “flip-coin” effect ... a best security environment can be used malicious intent too.

— and i’m not referring only to an email service.

[↩ Reply](#)

ultralight meme, [November 1, 2016 at 4:55 AM](#)

I guarantee you that compared to larger email providers, ProtonMail sends a negligible amount of spam at best.

And even if that weren’t true, that’s no reason to hide ProtonMail from search results. I don’t see your point here.

[↩ Reply](#)

a cynical realist, [October 29, 2016 at 4:14 PM](#)

Helping ProtonMail reach more people through social media. You can Tweet or share ProtonMail on Facebook with the share buttons below.

This is (i guess unintentionally) hilarious. You complain about one monopoly snubbing your reach, and rely on people utilizing two *further* monopolies in their respective domains to prevent it from repeating.

What’s stopping Facebook and Twitter from shadowbanning you next? They already do such things en masse to users with the wrong political opinions, so the infrastructure is there. And they serve the same government as Google, by the way.

These are dark times we are living in.

[↩ Reply](#)

MikeTO, [October 30, 2016 at 12:45 AM](#)

“Upgrading to a paid account or donating so we can rebuild our depleted emergency reserve fund faster.:

How about providing amazon affiliate link (US, UK and Canada). Protonmail can get 3% of all sales commission. I usually order from Amazon several times a year. With one million users I’m sure there are people using amazon to buy something.

This year alone I have spent over \$100 and about to spend some more.

[↩ Reply](#)

Adrian Pakulski, November 2, 2016 at 7:28 AM

This is one reason why I am using DuckDuckGo and Bing as often as I can.

[↩ Reply](#)

I, November 3, 2016 at 2:47 PM

“We believe online privacy is critical for an open, democratic, and free future”

If so, why such a marketing tone and constant pressure to pay in each of your blog posts? Yes, we can appreciate that the financial situation of Protonmail may be difficult, based on fact that [several other such providers](#) have had to give up. But asking for donations as an apparent end goal for all of your communications is harder a pill to swallow because - as I understand - Protonmail is for profit. Hence if abused of, this approach might more look like aggressive advertising - a paradox considering the very appreciated effort of Protonmail to avoid any external ad pollution.

Some (possibly many) of your users, including myself, are considering an upgrade of their account, even though their philosophy would precisely be in favour of a free web. But they may be turned away if the language and face of Protonmail are changing to little more than those of a business entity. What's to prevent Protonmail from turning into a capitalist aberration if commercial success and profit become its centres of gravity? Make it a people for people's endeavour first (as seems to be your stated reason for creating it), and many will be dragged to it without the need for constant solicitation.

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, November 4, 2016 at 10:17 PM

ProtonMail does not turn a profit and has never turned a profit. 100% of funds from users is put towards development, with some additional support coming from Swiss non-profit foundations and public funds.

[↩ Reply](#)

Kimberly, November 23, 2016 at 2:00 PM

This is somewhat of a paradoxical situation to me, for instance, I pay for a vpn because I want full transparency, absolutely no logging, plenty of options and safeguards that work and the ability to use them on several machines and mobiles. I could get a free vpn but I'd be sacrificing a lot I'm unwilling to. And no I'm not using it this moment for any of you smart arses who want to throw my ip out there. In smart enough to know that using it ALL the time is a red flag to my ISP.

[↩ Reply](#)

DeDoHo, November 4, 2016 at 4:48 AM

Hi,

I search from google.com (Indonesia) with keywords “encrypted email” & “secure email”, ProtonMail is number one from the top 10 list.

Congrats.

[↩ Reply](#)

Sam, November 6, 2016 at 1:23 AM

There are two analytical flaws in this article which overdramatise it (although I agree with the overall theme that Google’s algorithms can inhibit other firms (including competitors)...it’s a matter of debate, and conspiracy theories, as to whether that intentional or inadvertent)

First, you refer to changing from the .ch TLD to .com. Given how Google is known to work by looking at links between pages, it inconceivable that wasn’t a factor in a drop.

Second, you state “Google directly caused ProtonMail’s growth rate worldwide to be reduced by over 25% for over 10 months.” then “This meant that ProtonMail’s income from users was also cut by 25%, putting financial pressure on our operations.” This is entirely misleading cause and effect. Google may have stunted your growth rate (i.e. future users and income). It didn’t reduce the income from your existing user base i.e. those who had already registered with you and therefore didn’t need to google you to find you. It clearly causes issues as your reasonable expectations and budgeting must have been very difficult – but you didn’t actually ‘lose’ money.

Third, I’ve read elsewhere (New York Times I think) that you didn’t follow Google’s official suggestion for flagging such issues as SEO ‘experts’ suggested a response was unlikely. That was pretty daft if true. Logging through the ‘right’ channel creates an audit trail and evidence that their own processes weren’t following. By apparently acting like you were too important to follow that process doesn’t feel consistent with the image of your company that you’re trying to project.

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, November 7, 2016 at 8:39 PM

A lot of ProtonMail’s revenue comes from new customers who sign up, the drop in new customer sign up is what caused the bulk of the 25% drop. Regarding Google’s forum for reporting these issues, it is not an official channel, and there are many reasons why posting there is not a good idea. The reasons for NOT going there are explained at the bottom of this article: <http://searchengineland.com/hey-google-can-you-hear->

[me-262164](#)

[↩ Reply](#)

victorhck, [November 6, 2016 at 8:55 PM](#)

Spreading about !!

– <https://victorhckinthefreeworld.wordpress.com/2016/11/03/google-contra-el-servicio-de-correo-protonmail/>

Thanks for your service!

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, [November 7, 2016 at 8:36 PM](#)

Thanks for your support!

[↩ Reply](#)

Anon, [November 8, 2016 at 3:18 AM](#)

It was actually this news article that got protonmail on my radar and actually got me to subscribe ^_^

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [November 12, 2016 at 4:55 AM](#)

Which websites has this post been shared on? I'm curious why there are so many google fanboys under the post. They don't even read before commenting.

[↩ Reply](#)

Anonymous, [November 16, 2016 at 4:30 AM](#)

Even though I can only afford a free version of the fantastically great ProtonMail, I am constantly encouraging everyone I email to look at your service. I have gotten at least five people to signup. T'ain't much in the scope of the world wide web but I hope the rings will spread in the water. Keep hanging in with your wonderful service to freedom!

[↩ Reply](#)

Admin, [November 17, 2016 at 2:59 PM](#)

Thank you very much for your support!

[↩ Reply](#)

Martin, November 22, 2016 at 9:50 PM

I think maybe it's time to build ProtonSearch

[↩ Reply](#)

Sarah Benson, January 2, 2017 at 7:42 PM

Hullo. I have a query: as I was typing my email, I noticed that the page was moving without my doing anything. I have noticed this happening when I was editing a Wikipedia entry.....it appeared someone else was watching the page. I am wondering if Google has cracked the encryption.....

Best wishes
Sarah Benson

[↩ Reply](#)

eliz, January 24, 2017 at 10:24 PM

I don't like google, everything that is monopoly is not good.
I hope you don't really come into partnership with google, please. I would like to know the answer of Martin: (and why you are supporting Google + here on protonmail?)

[↩ Reply](#)

EP, January 29, 2017 at 2:50 AM

I load the Proton mail app for Android today (through downloader-apk), create an account and try to send a test mail and...
a pop up says I must install Google play services to use the app!
Are you kidding?
I try to get ride off those data vampire for 5 years and the most reliable mail service tells me to install a spy?
Why?

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Get your secure email account

[Create Account](#)

Proton Technologies AG

Chemin du Pré-Fleuri, 3
CH-1228 Plan-les-Ouates, Genève, Switzerland

✉ General: contact@protonmail.ch

✉ Media: media@protonmail.ch

For support inquiries, please visit

→ protonmail.com/support

For security related discussions
security@protonmail.ch

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