



Written by [James Heiser](#) on October 11, 2010

CEO Schmidt Insists Google Is Not “Creepy”

Google CEO Eric Schmidt recently attracted attention with his strange vision of a technological utopia, which is an odd blend of the unimaginative (cars that can drive themselves) — and the disturbing, as CNET’s Tom Krazit declared: “Schmidt and Google never seem to understand how much they freak some people out when they evangelize a future that de-emphasizes the role of people in their day-to-day lives.”

Now Schmidt has gone on the record: Google is not “creepy.” Seriously.

A [story](#) for Telegraph.co.uk on the not-creepy Schmidt & Co. led with his description of the company’s approach: “Google policy is to get right up to the creepy line and not cross it.” The article continued:



Schmidt was talking to *The Atlantic* about the possibility of a Google implant — a chip under your skin that would track you and provide easy web access. That, Schmidt said, was probably over “the creepy line.” However, he followed that by saying: “With your permission you give us more information about you, about your friends, and we can improve the quality of our searches. We don’t need you to type at all. We know where you are. We know where you’ve been. We can more or less know what you’re thinking about.”

Some might argue that that is over the line too but Google will only read your mind “with your permission,” so that’s a relief.

Many readers might think there is something almost self-contradictory about insisting you are not creepy, especially when your next words are a description of what could be interpreted as the corporate equivalent of stalking.

The notion that Google is creepy is nothing new to anyone who has perused the articles at [Google-Watch.org](#). Nor is it news to those who have read Schmidt’s previous disavowals of “creepiness.” Consider, for example, [an earlier article](#) by CNET’s Krazit. Nearly a year has passed since he wrote:

Google is trying not to be creepy.

That’s according to CEO Eric Schmidt, who told Fox Business Thursday that “we’re trying not to cross what we call the creepy line” when it comes to the data it gathers. As an example, Schmidt said Google only publishes satellite data that is a month old, indicating that Google would consider it creepy to publish real-time satellite data.

Google is quite used to facing charges that it has become a little too Big Brotherish in its conquest of the Internet search market. In response, it emphasizes that Google users have control over the data the company collects on them, most recently introducing Google Dashboard as a way of



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letting users see all the personal data the company has assembled in a single Web page.

That will likely never be enough to satisfy the hardcore privacy advocates of the world, but the general public — and the government — are also starting to get a little uneasy about Google's unparalleled reach across the Internet.

In short, the public is becoming aware that all the data they are generating while surfing the net is adding up to more of a profile of their lives and thoughts than they really want anyone to know. With the Obama administration planning how best to “wiretap” everything from email to Facebook to Skype, there is more than enough creepiness to go around.

Or, to amend the aphorism of Forrest Gump: “Creepy is as creepy does.”

Photo of Eric Schmidt: AP Images



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