

Vocational awe

digital companies are constrained by the fear that some enshittifying manoeuvre will prompt their users to google, “How do I disenshittify this?”

And, finally, **workers**. Tech workers have very low union density, but that doesn’t mean that tech workers don’t have labour power. The historical “talent shortage” of the tech sector meant that workers enjoyed a lot of leverage. Workers who disagreed with their bosses could quit and walk across the street and get another, better job.

They knew it and their bosses knew it. Ironically, this made tech workers highly exploitable. Tech workers overwhelmingly saw themselves as founders in waiting, entrepreneurs who were temporarily drawing a salary, heroic figures to be.

That’s why mottoes such as Google’s “Don’t be evil” and Facebook’s “Make the world more open and connected” mattered; they instilled a sense of mission in workers. It’s what the American academic Fobazi Ettarh calls “vocational awe” or Elon Musk calls being “extremely hardcore”.

Tech workers had lots of bargaining power, but they didn’t flex it when their bosses demanded that they sacrifice their health, their families, their sleep to meet arbitrary deadlines. So long as their bosses transformed their workplaces into whimsical “campuses”, with gyms, gourmet cafeterias, laundry service, massages

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