

Google not to blame for US newspaper crisis: CEO

WASHINGTON: Google is being unfairly scapegoated by newspaper publishers and wants to help the troubled industry build online revenue, the chief executive of the Internet giant said.



"With dwindling revenue and diminished resources, frustrated newspaper executives are looking for someone to blame," Google CEO Eric Schmidt said in an opinion column.

"Much of their anger is currently directed at Google, whom many executives view as getting all the benefit from the business relationship without giving much in return," Schmidt said. "The facts, I believe, suggest otherwise."

Among those who have criticised Google is the owner of *The Wall Street Journal*, News Corp. chairman Rupert Murdoch, who has accused the Internet search leader of "stealing" stories without sharing advertising revenue.

Murdoch has also threatened to block Google from indexing newspapers in the News Corp. stable and announced plans to begin charging readers on the Web. *The Journal* is currently the only News Corp. title that requires a subscription fee.

Google is a "great source of promotion" for newspapers through its aggregator website Google News and other services, Schmidt said.

"We send online news publishers a billion clicks a month from Google News and more than three billion extra visits from our other services, such as Web Search and iGoogle," he said.

Schmidt noted that publishers were free to remove their content from Google search or Google News at any time and denied assertions by some publishers that Google was reaping big profits from the newspaper industry.

"The revenue generated from the ads shown alongside news search queries is a tiny fraction of our search revenue."

Accurate information and analysis is "critical for a functioning democracy," Schmidt said, and Google wants to "work with publishers to help them build bigger audiences, better engage readers, and make more money."

He acknowledged it has been difficult for newspapers to make money online but said there was no single cause or single solution.

"Meeting that challenge will mean using technology to develop new ways to reach readers and keep them

engaged for longer, as well as new ways to raise revenue combining free and paid access," he said.

"I believe it also requires a change of tone in the debate, a recognition that we all have to work together to fulfill the promise of journalism in the digital age."

Source: AFP

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