

Google Fires Author of Divisive Memo on Gender Differences

[Alphabet Inc.](#)'s Google has fired an employee who wrote an internal memo blasting the web company's diversity policies, creating a firestorm across Silicon Valley.

James Damore, the Google engineer who wrote the note, confirmed his dismissal in an email, saying that he had been fired for "perpetuating gender stereotypes." He said he's "currently exploring all possible legal remedies."

The imbroglio at Google is the latest in a long string of incidents concerning gender bias and diversity in the tech enclave. Uber Technologies Inc. Chief Executive Officer [Travis Kalanick](#) lost his job in June [amid scandals](#) over sexual harassment, discrimination and an aggressive culture. Ellen Pao's [gender-discrimination lawsuit](#) against Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers in 2015 also brought the issue to light, and more women are speaking up to say they've been sidelined in the male-dominated industry, especially in engineering roles.

Earlier on Monday, Google CEO Sundar Pichai sent a note to employees that said portions of the memo "violate our Code of Conduct and cross the line by advancing harmful gender stereotypes in our workplace." But he didn't say if the company was taking action against the employee. A Google representative, asked about the dismissal, referred to Pichai's memo.

Damore's 10-page memorandum accused Google of silencing conservative political opinions and argued that biological differences play a role in the shortage of women in tech and leadership positions. It circulated widely inside the company and became public over the weekend, causing a furor that amplified the pressure on Google executives to take a more definitive stand.

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After the controversy swelled, Danielle Brown, Google's new vice president for diversity, integrity and governance, sent a statement to staff condemning Damore's views and reaffirmed the company's stance on diversity. In internal discussion boards, multiple employees said they supported firing the author, and some said they would not choose to work with him, according to postings viewed by Bloomberg News.

"We are unequivocal in our belief that diversity and inclusion are critical to our success as a company," Brown said in the statement. "We'll continue to stand for that and be committed to it for the long haul."

The memo and surrounding debate comes as Google fends off a lawsuit from the U.S. Department of Labor alleging the company systemically discriminates against women. Google has denied the charges, arguing that it doesn't have a gender gap in pay, but has declined to share full salary information with the government. According to the company's most recent demographic [report](#), 69 percent of its workforce and 80 percent of its technical staff are male.

Following the memo's publication, multiple executives shared an article from a senior engineer who recently left the company, Yonatan Zunger. In [the blog post](#), Zunger said that based on the context of the memo, he determined that he would "not in good conscience" assign any employees to work with its author. "You have just created a textbook hostile workplace environment," he wrote. He also said in a email, "Could you imagine having to work with someone who had just publicly questioned your basic competency to do your job?"

Still, some right-wing websites had already lionized the memo's author, and firing him could be seen as confirming some of the claims in the memo itself – that the company's culture makes no room for dissenting political opinions. That outcome could galvanize any backlash against Alphabet's efforts to make its workforce more diverse.

In her initial response to the memo, Brown, who joined from Intel Corp. in June, suggested that Google was open to all hosting "difficult political views," including those in the memo. However, she left open the possibility that Google could penalize the engineer for violating company policies. "But that discourse needs to work alongside the principles of equal employment found in our Code of Conduct, policies, and anti-discrimination laws," she wrote.

The subject of Google's ideological bent came up at the most recent shareholder meeting, in June. A shareholder asked executives whether conservatives would feel welcome at the company. Executives disagreed with the idea that anyone wouldn't.

"The company was founded under the principles of freedom of expression, diversity, inclusiveness and science-based thinking," Alphabet Chairman [Eric Schmidt](#) said at the time. "You'll also find that all of the other companies in our industry agree with us."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-08-08/google-fires-employee-behind-controversial-diversity-memo>