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Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one to one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined by Matt Brittin, Google's president of EMEA business and operations.

Matt started his career as a chartered surveyor before moving to McKinsey, where he advised media clients and caught the media bug. His next move was to publisher trinity Mirror, where he led the group's transition to digital. Joining Google in 2007, first as head of UK and Ireland, he quickly ascended through the ranks.

Now, as Google's top guy responsible for over half the planet including Europe, the Middle East and Africa, he plays a critical role in the company's global strategy. He also memorably defended Google at those tricky parliamentary hearing, where MPs lined up to give him a grilling.

Matt, thanks for joining me.

Hello, Paul. Thanks for inviting me.

At university, I think many people have a hobby and I think yours was rowing, but you took it to the ultimate extent, didn't you? You actually represented our country at the Olympics, is that right?

Well, not quite as glamorous as that! I was reasonably good at rowing. Took it up at school, did quite well, I was in the British junior team, went to Cambridge, did three silver medals in the Boat Race for Cambridge and then I was in the national team, so I went to the Seoul Olympics and also a few World Championships.

But did you ever consider a sporting career? Was that something that you thought you'd give some serious consideration to?

That was my sporting career! So in those days – it's a long time ago now, probably before you were born – in those days there wasn't a lot of funding for sports, the lottery was just getting started as I was reaching the end of my career. So you really had to be a student or have some way of funding your habit independently, so I did that for a few years. I got a silver medal and a bronze medal at World Championships, I was never the gold. And I sort of felt that I had reached the level that was the highest I was going to take so I moved on from that.

What did you move on to? What did you want to do next? Because the internet hadn't really massively taken off then, had it not?

No. I mean, if you had asked me at university did I want to work for Google, it didn't exist! I think Tim hadn't written the memo about the World Wide Web at that point so I remember having an email account at university, and the only people who could send you email were sitting in the computer lab with you, and so it didn't really seem like that was going to change the world.

So what was the first choice then? What was your career at that point, what were you going to do?

Well, originally what I did, I wanted to continue full time sport and being in the British rowing team and so I got a job in real estate, which just happens to be an industry that loves sports people, lots of rugby players were working there at the time and the guys that kindly gave me a job were happy for me to come in late having trained on the river, have a bit of a kip in the toilets at about 11 o'clock, go early to go weight training in the evening, and support that habit. And after a couple of years of that I decided I'd reached the pinnacle of my rowing career and stopped rowing and sort of continued in property for a while until I realised both I was not very good at it, and I wasn't seeing it as a long term career.

Not very good at the property, not the rowing at that point?

Well, frankly neither!

Right.

But I was looking for something new to latch on to, and after a while I went off to London Business School and did an MBA, and that really broadened my horizons and led me to consulting that you mentioned, and that's a great place to learn a load of skills but also to look at lots of different industries and I was fascinated by companies that had to interact with consumers at pace, and do complicated things and sort of try to delight them, in retail and then increasingly in media, and that led me to moving to Trinity Mirror where I worked for a couple of years trying to figure out how to work in a tough industry, but one I really enjoyed.

But at that point in your own mind had you already kind of focused your career energies around digital? Did you consider yourself an ambitious digital person?

Well, I guess that was the point at which digital was starting to take off. We were still on dial-up modems at that time, but you could see that there was something significant happening. And actually one of the reasons – I stayed only for a couple of years at Trinity Mirror – wasn't that I didn't love journalism and the purpose, I really enjoyed that side of things, we just had a bit of a disagreement over whether the digital revolution was a cyclical or a structural change. I felt clearly that it was a big structural shift, you could see what was happening with eyeballs, with advertising, with content creation, and I think others at the company felt that there was a bit of a cyclical cycle that they were going to ride out, so I sort of chose to move on at that point.

So how did Google come knocking at your door then? Because at that point no one knew they would become the global behemoth that they are now.

Yes, well you hear people talking about their careers and how it was all beautifully planned out, and you could say what Google were looking for was somebody who understood media, somebody who understood strategy, understood lots of different industries, somebody who had analytical skills but understood sales – I had been running some advertising sales things in Trinity Mirror – and I was a perfect candidate. But you kind of plotted that set of moves because Google didn't exist and wasn't looking for that kind of role earlier, but it just so happened they were looking for that combination of attributes, and having worked in the digital side of the business but understood how difficult it is to transition a traditional business for the digital world. When I was working at Google, my first job was to talk to large companies in the UK about how digital could help them grow and how Google could help them; it actually helped to understand that it was difficult for these people and you couldn't just show them a chart with the Internet going up into the left and say, "Why don't you get on there, get on the program?" and so I really enjoyed that.

How big were Google at the time then? Were you like employee number 10?

No, so this was 2007. I think there were probably 150-200 or so people.

It was obviously quite substantial at that point.

So a decent size and growing, so I wasn't in before the IPO or anything, but it was definitely a real time of growth a lot of hiring people and building relationships and building things, and I think that's one of the things I most enjoy today.

Clearly Google UK has grown underneath you. You've stayed at the top as the number of employees and the headcount has expanded, and your responsibilities have expanded; you're not just UK and Ireland now, it's Europe, Middle East Africa. I mean clearly it's a substantial career progression within Google.

Well, it's nice of you to say so! I mean, I really enjoyed it. I've been there for nine years and I suppose in the speed of Google that's quite a long time, so half the lifetime or more of the company, and the job in the UK was a great job because it was to look after what was at that point the second biggest market for Google outside the US, and it still is. And actually going from that to then looking after more countries across Europe, and now Europe, Middle East and Africa, has brought more variety to what I do and I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

I read somewhere that you mentioned that the organisational principles of the rowing team that you learned you need some kind of sporting career, helped you grow and expand Google's UK sales. Tell us about that.

Well, without getting too philosophical about it, I've been to business school I've worked at McKinsey and I've worked in lots of places, but I do think some of the things I learned from sport are things that I find a more defining of how I operate. So focusing on an objective and a clear vision and making sure everybody's aligned on something, and then getting the best out of the people you've got in the team. And so I sometimes bore people at work with these analogies, but getting the best people you can in your boat and to row together, that's actually a big part of what leadership is all about and I think people might say I'm quite a collaborative leader, I really try to think about how we get the best out of each other as a group, and equally with partners, so we work with lots of publishers and lots of businesses on how they can make the most of the web. And I see my job in that as being the same kind of thing; to get people together with a sense of purpose and see how we can all combine and make the best of what we have.

I mean, what's a typical week for you? Would you say that your job is a people job rather than a tech job as it were? Because there might be the argument, or people might think because Google is obviously a tech company, that you have a kind of tech job, but you're speaking about the people and putting teams together. Is that the main part of your job?

Yes, well I think anybody working in an organisation is fundamentally working with people. Within Google, a bit like a publishing company, you've got the journalists and the suits, and I think within Google you've got the people who are coding and everybody else, and I'm part of the everybody else. So every week I'm connecting with senior engineers who are building products and talking about how we can make them work better for consumers and businesses around the world, and in particular

in the markets that I'm responsible for, but I'm also connecting with our colleagues, you know, how are they seeing things, what are the problems that they've got, what can we do better. And also with customers; obviously Google is principally funded by advertising and therefore I'm talking to large advertisers, whether it's the big agency groups, retailers, telcos about how their digital transition is working. And we're not just doing advertising with them, we might be providing Google Apps, helping to work on YouTube, Google Maps, we might be doing other kinds of R and D work with them as well, so I find that really interesting because lots of people are trying to grapple with the fast pace of change – driven by consumers, don't forget, you know, you and I are using our devices, our iPhones, our Android phones, and changing the way we consume content, changing the way we find information, changing the way we communicate – and that makes it hard for established businesses to keep up, and that's one of the things I think I enjoy most about my job, is helping people to see how these new tools can be put to work to help their businesses grow.

What's the culture like at Google?

It's fast paced. It's an engineering company, so I think you would notice it's a very fact-based place. It's quite analytical in many senses, but it's also I hope fun. We have the good fortune to employ lots of younger people who are passionate about what they do, who are very collaborative, we really look for people who are roll their sleeves up, get stuck in and work alongside other people well, who can deal with change, you know, we're always changing how we're organised and how we're focusing. And I hope also outward looking; we really do try to look at things that can help millions of people every day and build products that work simply and brilliantly for them. So things like Google Translate, I think it's transformational how you can now communicate with somebody using an app on your phone, and I can speak one language and you can hear what I what I'm saying in a different language – it's almost like the Star Trek translator already! Things like that I think are brilliant, and I love being part of building and making them work.

They're almost part of day to day life now, some of the apps that you use – I mean, Google Maps for example, I wouldn't even set off somewhere without putting it putting it in so that I know the best way – and that must be an opportunity, but also consumers are quite fickle, aren't they? I mean, just before we started the podcast recording we mentioned about the browser wars; remember that Microsoft was getting into terrible trouble because of the dominance of Internet Explorer? I mean, these kind of issues seem so dated now because one minute a company can be completely dominant and have everything going for it, and then within a year they can be dead.

One of the facets of technology and the fast pace of consumer adoption of these devices is that it's incredibly competitive. So you mentioned you use a few Google apps, you might use search, YouTube, Maps, Gmail, whatever, and it's great. We

want you to use it because it's a great product, but we know that you can switch away to an alternative really easily. And you mentioned Microsoft and the challenge they had, they were actually investigated by the European Union, and as you know we're also facing questions from the European Union around our strength in search and how we use that, and we operate in the best interests of consumers, and also on Android, which is the operating system we built for mobile phones, so I think one of things we really take seriously, and I was actually in Brussels yesterday helping to answer questions about some of these things for politicians who have rightly got a remit to look at popular or dominant players and saying, "Are they acting in the right way?", answering questions for them about how we operate. And I'm really proud of how we operate and I'm happy to answer those questions, and I think there is a real education job to do there. As you rightly say, the pace of change is so fast. If you think if you've got an Android phone or an iPhone it's really easy to stop using one app and use another app. And we have to work really hard to make our apps as good as possible and it's super easy on an Android phone to take Google off your home screen and put Duck Duck Go or Yahoo or whatever you want on the home screen in a matter of seconds. And I think that's one of the things I'm spending time explaining to people and showing them actually, what the consumer experience is.

Do you think the legislators, particularly at Europe or maybe even in our parliament, do you think they have an adequate sense about commerciality, the sheer brutality of, as you just said, they could just change the app immediately. I mean I'm an iPhone user, but if they mess up the next version of the operating system and they don't fix it properly I'll just get an Android device; I won't think much of it. Apple are dead.

There is so much change going on it's hard for anybody to keep up with it. And if you're working in Brussels or working in parliament, you're working very hard on behalf of your constituents, perhaps you don't have time to pause and think about these changes and educate yourself, so I do think it's right for people like us to be asked these questions. You take the mobile phone as a key thing that's going on at the moment. We started Android in 2006, I think, we acquired a small start-up that was making an operating system for digital cameras. Larry and Sergei, our founders at the time, had a view that the mobile Internet was going to be something that was important in the future, and they wanted to make it easy for people to build apps for millions of mobile devices, and at the time every mobile phone had a different operating system, every network required different standards, it was just a huge barrier to innovation. And they decided to do something which is really at the heart of Google and what we what we do, you know, and that is to be open. So they built an open operating system called Android in partnership with loads of people, and it meant that any manufacturer could choose to take Android if they wanted to and they could customise it however they wanted – make it non-Google, make a version of it that was entirely theirs – and that led to a huge amount of innovation. So in 2008, one Android device, 35 apps, and it was a start. Today there are over 4,000

different Android devices from 400 different manufacturers on 500 different networks...

I always forget it's a Google initiative, actually. I think of it as a brand in its own right.

Yes, so when people ask us, well, you know, is Android crushing competition, what I say is, "Well actually, let's look at what's gone on." We've suddenly got this explosion of use, I think 1.4 billion people using Android devices, we paid out something like \$7bn to apps developers that are monetising their apps through Android, consumers got more choice than ever before. I was in Africa and I bought an Android smartphone for \$35. You know, this is increasing access to information and to apps and to connections and to computing that was never possible before, so that's the story really of what this is this is doing. And people can choose to have Google Apps on the phone or not, and people can choose alternatives, and that's part of the way it's built; to be open and to really to drive innovation, to drive choice and to drive competition.

We spoke about how regulators can try and keep you in check or at least call you to account, and it's right that you engage with them. But what about people that are commercially threatened by you guys? So for example, I remember the furore a few years ago about Google News, a lot of newspaper editors were saying no one can even come to our home page any more, and see our advertising revenue, because they can see the RSS feed through Google News. In one sense it's a competitive marketplace, you are innovating and therefore you have the right to enjoy the fruits of that labour, but you also get a lot of stick as it were from the various industries and sectors that you are disrupting?

Yes, and having been in journalism and newspapers I really understand what it feels like to be in a business which is being disrupted rapidly, and let's not forget the cause of the disruption is readers and advertisers have got more choice than ever before and they're choosing to take their attention and their money to other places, and that's a hard reality. I mean, Google News was actually born after the 9/11 attacks when our engineers realised that the Google search results were just not updating fast enough to give people the information that they were looking for really quickly. And so we built a search engine version that was optimised for fast-changing content. There's something like 65,000 accredited publishers that are shown in Google News, but you've got complete control if you're a publisher; you can choose to show up in Google search and in Google News; you can choose, if you have a paywall, how that operates with respect to your listings and those things, and we send 10 billion clicks a month through Google search and Google News to publishers' websites free. So I think again, you know, when I sit down with a publisher who is saying, "Well hang on, you've taken control here," we can say,

“You’ve got control, it’s in your hands, and we’re delivering a service to the users who come to Google to find great news content and we’re sending all this traffic to you.” That’s our starting point. And then let’s talk about what you can do with that traffic and are there some tools we can help you with that can help you see how to monetise those readers, how to give them more engaging content and so on and so forth, so I think we have an amazing set of relationships with publishers around the world and we’ve been doing a lot more recently to get into some of the things which are most challenging for this transition of the publishing industry to the digital age.

Yes, tell us about this digital news initiative.

About two years ago now I started to have conversations, as did colleagues, and another colleague of mine Carlo D’Asaro Biondo, also come from the publishing industry, and he and I, we’re hearing from publishers more and more this disruption is getting more serious, the shift to mobile is making it even harder. And so about a year ago we convened a small group of publishers, just eight, to talk about what really could Google do to help. Where was it that our skills and technologies could come together and complement what publishers were already doing. We formed the digital news initiative, six publishers originally there is now 160 as part of the digital news initiative, and there are a few focus things we’re doing. So, product. There are ways in which we can help them build product that will make the news experience online better. So whether it’s how they work with YouTube or, something which is just coming out now, accelerated mobile pages, so reading news content on a mobile device can often be quite slow. You go to the website, it takes a while to load and so on and so forth. And so we worked, again with an open standard, it’s not just a Google product, it’s Twitter and Pinterest and others are involved as well.

Is this a kind of pre-fetch technology?

Yes, so basically it makes the experience for the reader of accessing a publisher’s content much, much faster, and of course they can add their advertising and everything else, but it’s about making the user experience great because we know speed online is the forgotten killer app; if you’re not fast enough then people get bored very quickly and the next publisher is just a swipe away. So that’s something I think which is really helpful to the industry, and we’re proud to see it launch and it’s getting quite significant take-up. So that’s one area of product. Another is an innovation fund, so one of the things I was very conscious of in my past was how difficult it was in a newspaper company to get funding to try things in an obviously really tightly constrained environment, and so we were able to put together a fund which is €150 million which we’re aiming to invest over the next few years, and we’ve just made the first series of grants and we’ve granted...

Are podcasts eligible?

Yes! So what it is...

No, we don't want your money, it's okay.

No, you should apply! I mean, if you've got some innovative ideas...

Oh, no we're all out of those.

Okay, well maybe somebody listening to this might have some, Paul! Then apply, because what we're trying to do is help people experiment, and it's that kind of what we heard from publishers was it's getting the first experiment off the ground that you can then use to build a business case that's interesting, so I think we've granted 27 million to 128 projects in 22 different European countries.

So you kind of extending that sandbox culture that you have within Google outward into wider society and the wider tech developer and media space.

You know, you've asked a couple of times about the challenges of this disruption that's going on, and I think really trying new things and seeing what works is part of the way we work, and it's part of the way that anybody can work in the digital world. And so these kind of grants to publishers are helping them to experiment with new ways of telling stories, with new ways of connecting with readers, and we'll see – some of them will be successful, some of them will not be successful, but it'll allow people to be creative and use what they know to do new and different things. And then of course we're also investing in research and in training. So Matt Cooke is an ex-BBC journalist you probably know in the UK, he's leading our efforts on what we call News Lab, which is about going to newsrooms and helping them to research readership trends, helping them to use tools like Google Trends and other things to improve some of the ways they tell stories, to complement some of the things they do journalistically, and I think that's really an interesting initiative as well. So we're trying to find ways where we can bring what we do to complement what publishers and journalists know how to do really well.

And data journalism seems to be an ideal fit at the moment, it's huge at the moment. Mining these huge repositories of what we know to gain societal trends and conclusions, and that's amazing.

Yes, it's a fascinating new field I think, and for journalism it's an important field but also actually for medical science, so listeners may have seen some stories that I think the Daily Mail covered some early research work that deep mined part of Google is doing with the NHS, so some clinicians in I think the Royal Free Hospital actually, approached our engineers and said, "Can you help us with some data and analytics to see whether we can find better ways to get to better medical outcomes in treating of illness and disease?" It's a great opportunity. The data, of course NHS

standards apply, it has to be well protected from a privacy standpoint of course we have the same controls and safeguards on our side, but I think there's a huge opportunity to look at large sets of data and spot patterns that humans wouldn't necessarily be able to spot without those tools, that could allow us to treat disease better and improve health care outcomes for people. That's a good example I think of, with the right controls in place, bringing these new tools to solve hard problems.

Clearly you've got a kind of innovative disruptive culture, in a good way, within Google and out of it as I can see, but do you think that people are starting to see you as part of the media establishment?

Well it's interesting, I listened to your episode with Sir Martin Sorrell who's one of the one of the biggest buyers, if not the biggest buyer, of media on the planet. He always refers to Google as a media company – “don't mistake them for a technology company, they're a media company” – and I'd say we do make our money through what you might call media, but we are by DNA a technology company. Our engineers spend time thinking about how we can use computer science to solve problems that will help billions of people. And so I think yes, it's competitive in the media world and we have teams out there trying to convince people that they should spend some money on YouTube because that's where the audience is, and of course the money they spend on YouTube we share the majority of it with the content creators on YouTube, which helps them to build innovative new businesses and to grow and to do new innovative things, so it's definitely true that that's where we make money. It's not quite fair to say that we just take money from an existing media and move it across; we have millions of customers, most of them are small businesses for whom advertising was never affordable before, and one of the big opportunities – particularly for the UK which is really good at e-commerce – is every business today is a digital business, because every consumer's got the Internet in her pocket. And if you're selling cycling shoes and somebody is looking for cycling shoes right now anywhere on the planet, you can show up and sell them cycling shoes – and that is a huge opportunity for any small business. It used to be only the big ones that can reach global demand and access these kind of services and the best technology; now anybody with a smartphone has got access to that huge customer base.

Where do you think the wider societal changes have come as a result of Google's existence? Because I mean, the impact even on society is immeasurable. I've got friends that, obviously when they're dating, they want they won't even go on a first date with someone until they've Googled the hell out of whoever they're about to meet. You know, you've got the right to be forgotten initiative... these are these are wider societal impacts that you could argue are beyond merely a technological question. It's about what we can know about each other.

Yes. I think the technology revolution and widespread access to information, the advance of social media and the tools that allow anybody now to be a publisher – you know, my kids can tweet and post videos and Snapchat and they can reach a significant audience if they if they want to – so there's a big world of change, and I think society does take time to catch up and figure out what the norms are. You know, when you're out to dinner is it acceptable to have your mobile device out or should it be on the table in the pile and anybody who wants to put their hand on the device has to pay for the meal?

That's a great idea, isn't it?

What are the right norms? And the same applies I think in more serious areas, like data security, you know, the Snowden revelations showed us some areas where perhaps governance of governments could be improved. When you're thinking about what content you want to share online about yourself, do you want to share it with everybody? Do you want to share it just with your family? And we try to be really thoughtful about these things and to make sure that when we're building products we give users two things: transparency, so this is how the service is set up to use your information and your content and control, you can opt in and opt out and see what's going on and control how things are shared, and we think those principles are really, really important in this world of fast change, but I think we'll see whether there's a different effect on the next generation who've grown up as digital natives, as they're called, living with this technology, are their attitudes the same or different from those of us who've had introduced to our lives later?

There is a kind of generational attitude. Because I mean, when Facebook first came out and everyone was saying if you're applying for jobs you shouldn't put pictures of you having a few beers in a nightclub or whatever, because prospective employees would see that. I mean now, no one would care in fact if you didn't have that kind of stuff you probably wouldn't be hired because you've not a normal university experience, so there is a kind of shift in perception and attitude to these kind of things.

Yes, I think what we find though is that the next generation – the millennials, the teenagers, whatever you want to call them now – are also quite thoughtful about privacy and security. They may have different views on how they go about it, but they're quite smart about these things and you find them being quite thoughtful about choices; they're perhaps a bit more aware they're making trade-offs all the time – I'm going to share this but I might get that. And I think it's interesting to listen to them, and I think one of the things that I try to spend time doing is all the time talking to people about how they use technology and products, talking to businesses and organisations, and actually to governments and policymakers about these challenges as well, and generally I think that a good combination of smart sensible laws and technology innovation, and working with users, can lead to really good

outcomes. To give you an example of that, on YouTube, we acquired YouTube a long time ago when it was actually pretty small, and we've been operating it as it scaled phenomenally. I mean, the amount of content on YouTube is unbelievable; you can find pretty much anything on any subject. I've taken to asking audiences where I'm speaking, "Who's learned how to do something by watching a video on YouTube?"

Tons of people! Almost everyone in the world.

Every hand goes up and it's from cooking to cleaning...

Playing poker...

... to playing poker, dancing, make-up, hair...

Search engine optimisation...

Search engine... you know. And technical things, fixing car headlamps, you name it. It's a massive change. But on YouTube, when we bought it, of course it had a whole bunch of lawsuits hanging around it around copyright. So how do you protect copyright in a world where anybody can sling up a copy of your movie, film your band playing live, be at a football match and film a Premier League goal, that kind of thing. And what we try to do is work with the industry to understand how we can provide them with tools and controls; we've built something called content ID. So if you go to YouTube and say, "This is my content, I want to find all the copies of the content across YouTube," even if it's a shaky handheld camera in a movie studio filming in a cinema or filming the screen for a few seconds, we can find that for you. So you may have experienced this, if you've uploaded a video to YouTube and it's got some music playing in the background we might have sent you a notice saying, "We suspect you may not be the copyright owner of this music. Would you like to remove it and replace it with something where you do have the right?"

And that's obviously an algorithm that tries to detect these patterns.

Yes. But what we find is, when copyright owners claim their content, over 90% of them leave it there. So once they've got control on it, we give them control and you can choose...

So it's an advert.

Well, because exactly that. Often times it's fans sharing their passion for a band, a movie, a TV show or whatever with others around the world. And actually it's kind of free marketing that allows them to connect with a potential audience. I remember an example from years ago, the Monty Python guys saw pirated content on YouTube

and they came along and they actually did a video saying, “Oi! Stop ripping off our content – go and buy the 16 ton CD box set,” and the sales of their DVD box set went through the roof, because there was just latent demand for Monty Python content there. So I think that’s a good example of how, if we work together, we can protect rights and bring new technologies that will increase utility for people so the content creators have a new audience a new opportunity to share their content and to make money from it, and the audience has an opportunity to share their passions and experience more content than ever before, so an explosion of choice. Now, there’s a lot of work to do to increase the amount of revenue that people can make over time and to devise new business models, but I think it’s an optimistic journey that we’re on there.

How can you monetise YouTube in different ways? I’ll give you an example. I put on a Queen greatest hits playlist the other day – because YouTube is absolutely fantastic for music but annoyingly, every third or fourth song an advert came up. And part of me thought, “I wonder if there’s a way that I could just pay £8 a month to get rid of the adverts,” in the same way that you would with Spotify or Netflix or whatever.

Great question. You’re absolutely right; YouTube is primarily funded through advertising. We have in particular skippable advertising which is interesting, so the advertiser only pays when somebody chooses to watch the ad, which is quite different from the traditional form of advertising.

Yes, because the film trailer says you can skip in 10 seconds but actually if it’s a powerful opening you end up not skipping and watching the whole trailer.

And of course if you’ve gone to YouTube to watch a video and you see some entertaining video that happens to be from a brand or a movie that you might want to watch, then it’s good for you and it’s good for the content creator. But we have, to your point, launched a subscription service for YouTube in the US and we’re hoping to bring it to other countries soon. So it gives people the choice, you can choose to watch without ads and with other enhancements and a range of other things, and I think the more choice we can give you the more opportunity there is for you to consume content and to pay for it in new and different ways. Again, we’re trying to work collaboratively with the industry in its broadest sense, whether it’s music or movies or other forms of content creators, to find ways of helping them to make money and build this new audience online, because the big thing about the digital world and YouTube in particular is 85% of the content on YouTube is consumed outside the country it was created in. You know, your podcast as I want an audience that goes beyond the UK, YouTube has an audience that goes globally, and people love watching content from other cultures and this is I think one of the great opportunities of technology is it’s breaking down those international barriers, it’s helping people build relationships and connect with people from all around the world.

How does that work in terms of something that might be culturally acceptable or even legal here in the UK might not be in another country? Given that you are a truly international organisation, that must be incredibly difficult to manage because you don't want the managing director of Google Turkey to be constantly under arrest because of some search results of a French website, for example.

And these things do happen. So of course we work very hard to comply with all the laws in all the countries in which we operate because those rules and laws are different example, and an example might be Nazi content is banned in Germany, so we need to make sure that Nazi content doesn't appear on YouTube, and we have technology but we also have flagging processes so that users can say this content looks inappropriate and we can review and take down very quickly, that's one of the obligations, but you're right. For a company with the size that Google now is, it's something that we can do. If you're a small business trying to build something that's global, it's harder for you. And one of the things I was talking about in Brussels this week was the move to a digital single market. And so they're trying to simplify it at the moment, there are 28 different rule books around data protection for the 28 different member states of Europe. Actually, there are 19 different data protection authorities.

That's incredible. That's one of the things you would expect the EU to have already kind of harmonised across all the nation states.

But of course everybody would say yes, "I'd like one single rule book," but of course they like their own rule book to be the rule book. And so some of that stuff will take a bit of time to sort through, but I think those are the kinds of things where policymakers can play a role in making it easier for people to innovate and build new businesses that can scale really fast.

Just staying on YouTube for a few more minutes, how is it working in terms of the disruption to traditional broadcasters? I'm thinking beyond kind of BBC and ITV, I'm thinking of Sky – because I have a YouTube app on my TV, and I can choose to go to YouTube and most of the stuff I need to see is already there.

I mean, if you go back to the ancient Greeks it was feared that writing would destroy conversation. And I think we've seen with every successive media coming along that's an and game, not an or game and I think that's absolutely true in the case of TV. You know, the language really gets in the way here. What is television? Is it the box in the corner of the room or is that the shows that I'm watching on the box? If I'm watching a show from ITV on my phone while I'm on the train, is that television or is that is that video or is it something else? And I think the industry's in a bit of a mix-up

in terms of how it thinks about all this stuff, but I do think it's an and game and many broadcasters are using YouTube to build their audience. If you look at... I mean, the US TV hosts are brilliant at this, so people like Jimmy Kimmel, James Corden's doing this really well as well. They're making stuff for the Internet, for YouTube, that allows their audience to get engaged with them in amazing ways, and then they quite often bring some of that back to the TV show. So I think it can be really complementary, and also you think about somebody who is making television today. They have so many more moments that they can connect with the viewer in that were never possible before; on the train, on the move, at the bus stop, wherever, you can now consume video content, and of course in the early days of the Internet it was a text-based medium. And text is brilliant for various things, reading long articles and understanding things and for fiction and so on and so forth, but video is also a very natural way, and if you think about the example of people learning to do stuff from watching videos on YouTube, there are many things that people are inspired to do and do as a result of watching videos that they might not have the confidence to do from reading an instruction manual. So I think different things for different moments. I think it's an amazing time to be creative at the moment and actually a content producer is disruptive, but there are so many things that you can try, and so many ways – like you do – that you can connect with an audience that were never possible before.

And it's available to our politicians as well. As you were talking I was thinking of Barack Obama who of course appears on the regular news shows. But when I think of all the great things that he's done recently in terms of media it would be between two ferns, comedians in cars getting coffee, his recent White House Correspondents Dinner where he does all these spoof videos and they're straight on YouTube and get hundreds of thousands of views. .. he see can cut out all of the journalists and the TV networks and go straight to the voter.

Yes, and I think again it's an and game not an or game, so he's able to do that. And maybe this is part of the Trump effect, that a politician can connect directly with an audience – and Donald Trump's done a lot of going direct to voters through social media as well – but people are also wanting the experienced, qualified journalistic analysis as well. And I think this is one of the transitions that we're all making as a society and journalism as an industry is, is how do we use this new technology in ways that enhance our ability to do storytelling? In a world when I can access all the world's information, I actually need editing skills more than ever before; I need people who can guide me to great content. Now, some of the ways you're guiding me to great content might be friends on Facebook are sharing stories, that's a social way of guiding, I might follow you on Twitter because I like what you do and you're linking to things I'm interested in, I might find stories in Google News, I might go to an app of there's a news producer that I'm particularly keen on. So lots of different ways that people are being guided to great content but I do think editing skills,

knowing an audience, knowing how to write well and also obviously professional investigative journalism is something that's vital for the future. I care about it a lot having worked in the field. What we talked about on the digital news initiative is part of us trying to help the industry make that transition and to experiment and to learn and to develop.

Do you feel a sense of responsibility given how big you are? That must weigh heavily on your mind. Because the adage is 'do no evil'. And clearly you're not setting out to do that, but sometimes Google reminds me of the BBC which is that you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't; whatever you do you're going to have a queue of people waiting to have a go at you.

It's true that when you're popular and big and you are seen as the leading edge of disruption that you get a lot of questions and criticisms, and one of the things I've tried to do in this role is to recognise the fact that we need to show up more and answer those critics and tell our side of the story. And where we can improve we want to improve and change, so you've seen me appear in front of select committees on the subject of tax and our contribution, I think it's right that elected MPs have the opportunity to quiz businesses on what they're doing and hopefully that businesses are able to answer their questions directly and straight, I think is important to do that. And similarly in Europe where people, sometimes competitors but it doesn't matter, if people are raising questions about competition those questions need to be answered, so I do think it's part of my job to ensure that Google shows up and listens, puts our side of the story but also works with regulators, politicians and businesses to try to build a future that's better for everybody together. So that's something I enjoy. It can be more challenging, but I think it's an important part of our responsibility.

The first time I'd heard of you and read interviews with you online, but I'd never actually seen video of you until you appeared before the select committee. And I personally don't condemn Google, you pay all of the tax that you have to do legally. It's obviously a problem that we have in this country and beyond that corporations are rightly paying the minimum amount of tax that they have to do legally. I blame the legislators. But without getting into that, what was that like to be the kind of centre of that, and did you get hate mail, how did it work?

So it wasn't my favourite day that I've ever had at work! But I as I said I do personally feel it's very important for companies to show up and answer questions. Select committee format is not always conducive to be able to get your answers out there, and some of the questions that you get asked are not always relevant to the topic at hand, so I try to do my best to respect the MPs and their questions because they're representing the people, but I do think it's important for parliament to be able to scrutinise things, but they also need to do it in a way where people are prepared to

show up and don't want to avoid that kind of... that kind of forum. And sometimes those forms can be quite difficult just to get out a full answer to a question, and if you're answering questions about tax it's a complicated thing. We just had a six-year review by the HMRC that told us exactly how much tax we're paying and I was there to say we're paying the amount the tax authority has asked us to pay. You know, it's not clear to me what more we can do.

If you weren't you'd be in front of the magistrate, it's as simple as that.

Completely. So the politicians set the rules, we have a body that enforces the rules and we follow the rules and that's what we do. But from a personal point of view it's an interesting experience. I think it's important that companies do show up and answer these kinds of questions. I would prefer to spend my time building products that people love and innovating and helping drive growth, but I realise that when you are popular and big and in a disruptive space that you should also spend time listening to those questions and thinking about how you can improve where that's possible.

When you are kind of normal social functions and you bump into real people and you tell them what you do, what's the kind of biggest misconception they have about Google? What do you talk to people – like what I would call 'normal' people who aren't kind of media types like me and you – what do they ask you?

Well, one of the questions I often get asked is who does the doodles on the home page, the little, you know...

They are great.

... people love that. It's interesting that that's something that delights people, and having a sense of fun and playfulness in what you do I think is something that I enjoy. People ask technically how the stuff works, and they usually sort of want to tell you about an experience they've had, whether it's learning something on YouTube or using voice for the first time or whatever, so quite often it's about how much they like using the products is the main thing they talk about, which is great to hear, and sometimes it's, "Could you make this better?" "Could you make it different?" "How about this?" "Have you got that?" so I'm always interested to hear that too.

And you feed that directly back? Because I mean, I know a few people high up in certain organisations and I never try to trouble them with actual end user feedback. One of my clients is the chief executive of a bank, and if I get a small error I would never go straight to him because that would embarrass me as well as him.

I think it's, you know, there's an old... Sir John Harvey Jones used to do a show, Back to the Floor or something, and I think there is that thing where it's easy as a manager to get distant from the reality of your customers and your users.

Because you must use Google yourself as a normal person on your Android smartphone.

Yes, and I use it on Apple devices and I use Facebook and I use Snapchat – well, it's not designed for me – but I try to be in the flow of all the stuff that is important to my job to understand how does this stuff work. So when I do get people talking to me or people mailing me with complaints or suggestions, I try to make sure that I follow them up and it gives me a sense of what people are concerned about. Sometimes it's somewhat amusing, so we have Street View on Google Maps which is the ability to click on a map and see what the you of the street is around, and I've had a number of people writing and saying, "Could you come back because my bins were out when you drove past and took a photograph and I'd like the house re-photographed and how much would it cost me to get you to drive past and do it again?"

And do they just email you directly then? What do they do, guess your e-mail address and go straight to you?

Yes, well, you know, you can find e-mail addresses of people online and so you do get some of those. I'm not encouraging people to kind of mail me directly because I can't come back and photograph your house tomorrow.

What's next for Google then over the next few years? Are you going to acquire more businesses and more apps? Are you going to try and refine and do what you do better? What's next in the kind of medium term.

Well, there are lots of things we're excited about. I should say that last summer we restructured the company to be a bit clearer with the outside world what we were doing, so we launched this new holding company called Alphabet, and Google is one part of it, the biggest part of it, and obviously the most established part of it. We've got lots more research and development type things we're doing with X, which is our experimental area, it's working on things like using weather balloons to transmit the Internet to the most remote places on the planet...

Incredible.

... life sciences, we're trying to work with Novartis to commercialise a contact lens that can detect your blood sugar levels so that for a diabetic you can see when you need to administer things, rather than have invasive testing. So there are lots of things we're doing there which are innovative. I think the other thing we tend to do is

look at the big... you know, the big trends. The big trends for us at the moment are the Internet population is doubling. It's all mobile and making Android work brilliantly for the manufacturers who want to use it, for the consumers who want to use it, that's a key thing for us to do. Something else that's interesting is machine learning. So you've seen I think, Deep Mind, it's a Google company that just won the... beat the world champion in Go, a complicated game of strategy that I don't really understand...

I don't really understand either, if I'm honest.

The combination of moves possible there are huge, and to build a machine that could learn the rules and then beat the best player on the planet is a really interesting step. That sounds quite removed from our lives but we are applying the same technology to things that people use every day, so the language recognition power of machine learning helps us to make your search results better. The speech recognition capability helps us to increase the accuracy of any language in any accent that's been spoken when you're asking Google a question or when you're using voice to dictate or whatever, the image processing capability of machine learning is what's allowing us to, in Google photos, you can search for stuff which is not labelled in your photos and will find hugs or sunsets or dogs or places. And so that kind of capability is being built into everyday products, and it's making them better, faster and accessible to more people than ever before. So I think those two things; connectivity, machine learning, maybe some virtual reality stuff that's coming that's quite exciting, some of those trends are really interesting for us.

One of the things that's very interesting about your response is you talk about all those exciting opportunities but there is no commercial targets as it were. You mentioned Martin Sorrell, but he's very commercial, he's saying, "Right, we need to grow the company by 6% and do this and do that." Is there a commercial arm to what you do? Because you are a business. Is the scope for growth a geographical one? You're responsible for the Middle East and Africa, is that where the growth is?

Every country that I'm responsible for can do more to make the most of the Internet, whether it's on the consumer side, you know, using tools to make their lives better, to find information, to educate themselves and so on, or the business side which is connecting with the next five billion people to come online and offering your products or services or content. So there's definitely geographic sort of opportunity for Google. It's extremely competitive in innovation, and we do a lot of work to try to help other people innovate on our platforms, whether it's YouTube with content, whether it's apps developers on Android, that kind of that kind of thing, so there is definitely growth there, but I think our philosophy has always been, and long may it continue, we want to build great products. And how we make money comes second not first. A good example would be Chrome, which is our browser. We launched Chrome at a

time when browsers were quite slow, there hadn't been much innovation, and the Internet was getting full of pictures and maps and videos and things and it was really slowing down the experience, and we've built Chrome as a really fast browser. We didn't build it with the ambition of becoming the world's most popular browser. It has done, but we built it with the ambition of making browsers faster, so we made open source, which means anybody can take the code and the engineering work that's been built to build Chrome and build it into their own browser or build on top of it – and almost overnight browsers became faster. So the experience of accessing the Internet became a better experience for many people. And so those of us who have a business model that's online stand to benefit in the long run; if more people are online then maybe there's an opportunity for more online advertising to work well for people, or maybe there's an opportunity to innovate in other areas, so that hopefully shows you an example of how we think about build innovations that help people, and over the long run that creates opportunities, business opportunities, too.

Do you think there's a cultural thing, you mentioned there about the open source nature of how you do business, I mean I use an Apple iPhone and it's obviously a closed system, it's got a walled guard, and I remember that because when Apple used to use Google as its maps it was fantastic, and then when they decided to move against you guys that there was a period where there wasn't a Google Maps app on the phone because clearly you created the app but Apple were delaying that. That was terrible because their map system was... in a sense, Google were the underdog at that point, because I'm someone who wanted to use the Google Maps app and couldn't. So I saw the other side of that.

Yes. I think what we want to do is build products that people want to use because they're great. And that's a good example of when consumers demonstrated that they really wanted the Google product and actually Tim Cook I think kindly wrote to people and said, "Look, we got it wrong, we do want to give you a choice here," and I think that we welcomed that. And certainly I think our approach... we try to be an open approach. In search we want the most relevant website to come top, not the one that will pay us the most money. On YouTube we want you to find whatever content is available and interesting to you, even if it costs us money to host something that's only watched by a handful of people. And I think that that comes from being born of the Internet and believing in those sort of values of openness and accessibility for everyone, and I think that's an important part of who we are and maybe what makes us different from an Apple – huge respect for Apple, amazing products, amazing innovation. Android does some different stuff with a different philosophy, it's brought that kind of quality of experience to somebody in Kenya buying a smartphone for \$35, and I think that's... I'm really proud that we do that, and that competition between all of those companies is creating faster and faster innovation that benefits more and more people. And we're at a time when the pace

of innovation that benefits people is accelerating in a way that's never been seen before.

Penultimate question then is, what is a kind of typical week for you in terms of... are you constantly travelling to all the various different areas, building your teams, or do you do most of it via video calling etc.? What are the kind of challenges that you deal with on a day to day basis? And a final question is, what's next for you personally? Because that in a sense you've got one of the best jobs there is! I'll be intrigued to find out what your personal plans are.

Typical week for me is very varied. I do try to travel a lot and I do try to spend time with our teams and with customers, partners and users as much as I can do. For example, this week I went to Brussels for a day. Part of that is about helping the people who are asking us questions in Brussels to understand our answers to them, and so part of my job is to make sure we do show up and answer questions so I spent some time explaining how YouTube and Android work to some of the political leaders there. I also hosted an event for women and technology; we've got a big programme that we're doing which is about helping people gain digital skills across the EU, something like 900,000 jobs are going to go unfilled because of a lack of digital skills over the next few years, so we've trained over the last 12 months over a million Europeans in digital skills, so coding but also how to use analytics, how to make a website work, how to understand social media, and that's something we're doing because we believe that Europe needs these skills if it wants to thrive in the future. So that was that was one day. Meeting some politicians, answering some questions, explaining how things work, but also hosting an event which is about women gaining digital skills. Of the million we've trained, 43% of female which is a good step forward in a world where at Google we've published our stats and 70% of our staff are male. Same at Apple, same at Facebook, the same in information communications technology in Europe, so there's a lot to do there.

There's a male bias in tech.

Yes, and that's something that needs to change because there's no evidence at all that women can't be just as good at men at coding; some of our top engineers are female, and we see that coming out of the woodwork now we're making these programs available to everyone. As I say, nearly half of the people who've gone through our digital training in Europe are female. So I've deviated from answering a question a bit about my typical week, but some of those things – meeting customers, meeting politicians, promoting digital skills. I've been in Moscow recently, in Prague recently, doing similar things, so really trying to understand what's going on and see how we can do better and to help. And I really enjoy it. One of the things that's kept me at Google for nine years I think is the variety, whether it be answering tough questions from politicians or in the media, or working with our engineers to think about how we can make the next great product work well, being a bit of an

evangelist for what digital can do for growth, for prosperity, and actually for education and for empowering people, and being excited to see what the next thing around the corner might be.

This sounds a really sycophantic question actually, but it's a genuine one. I think you've got one of the best jobs there is really. I mean, if I could think of the job that I would want to do, kind of running Google EMEA in terms of the pace of change and your ability to effect change and be a disruptor, it's an incredibly good position to be in, albeit one tempered with a lot of responsibility.

Yes. I really enjoy and thank you for saying that, but it's also quite hard...

Oh, here we go! Go on then... tell us the bad things, then. Is it a lot of hours, then? What are the bad things?

I work hard, and some of the hours I work are to make sure I can connect with some of our leadership in California and they're eight hours behind us, and therefore... and I don't mean that in a...

I've got a client in LA, it's tough. Late nights.

And so that can be tough, and actually one of the challenges for a company like Google is how do you stay fast and innovative as you get bigger? So there is more coordinating to be done and more internal work to be done to make sure we're agile and responsive and innovating fast, and that can be challenging as well; but I can't pretend it's anything other than hugely energising to spend time doing what I do, and even on the toughest days where you're getting tough questions, I'm proud to be answering those questions because I believe we're operating with the right values and the right spirit, and trying to build things that work for everyone and that benefit as many people as possible.

And what's next for you personally, that's the difficult question. I know it's a very difficult to answer, but have you ever fancied becoming like Minister of State for IT Skills? Or a public service job maybe the BBC? You can say it's none of our business but you can't blame me for asking.

I have no idea! I mean, I really enjoy what I'm doing at the moment. That sounds like a diplomatic answer, but...

It's a difficult question to answer, really. You can hardly say, "Well, I'm looking for a new job right now."

Every time I look at other things I just turn back and see what I've got to do in the in tray, and I think, you know, "That's a really interesting thing to do." It's true I'm passionate about education; I've got two teenage sons and I'm seeing them being taught in the same way I was taught and the same way my mum and dad were taught, and I'm wondering whether that's really the way forward. Now, I'm not an expert but I do think when you see people learning from online video and people... I was in Soweto and I visited an after-school club, and the kids were learning English on smartphones, and they were four and five.

Was it via an app or via YouTube or something?

They were using apps and YouTube and all sorts of stuff, and I think there's a huge shift going on. And so I'm interested in how that shift impacts society and impacts our children's future, so potentially I might spend time on some of those things in the future. A lot respect for our politicians, I'm not sure I've got the patience or the skills to be one, and actually I do think we're in a world where, if you're in a company that's able to have impact, you can do a lot of good doing that. And I'm really proud of what we've done on digital skills; as I say, we've trained a million Europeans, we're going to train another million in the next year. We're aiming to train a million Africans in digital skills too. And companies that are using our tools for business are growing faster, exporting more and creating jobs, and it's great to be a part of that.

Matt, thank you for your time, I've learnt a lot. It's been great.

Thank you, Paul. I enjoyed it.