

EXHIBIT K

Nick Denton

# Taking a post down



Nick Denton  
7/17/15 2:30pm



Yesterday evening, Gawker.com published a story about the CFO of Conde Nast texting an escort. It was an editorial call, a close call around which there were more internal disagreements than usual. And it is a decision I regret.

The story involves extortion, illegality and reckless behavior, sufficient justification at least in tabloid news terms. The account was true and well-reported. It concerns a senior business executive at one of the most powerful media companies on the planet.

In the early days of the internet, that would have been enough. “We put truths on the internet.” That has been the longstanding position of Gawker journalists, some of the most uncompromising and uncompromised on the internet. I cannot blame our editors and writers for pursuing that original mission.

But the media environment has changed, our readers have changed, and I have changed. Not only is criticism of yesterday’s piece from readers intense, but much of what they’ve said has resonated. Some of our own writers, proud to work at one of the only independent media companies, are equally appalled.

I believe this public mood reflects a growing recognition that we all have secrets, and they are not all equally worthy of exposure. I can’t defend yesterday’s story as I can our coverage of Bill O’Reilly, Hillary Clinton or Hulk Hogan.

We are proud of running stories that others shy away from, often to preserve relationships or access. But the line has moved. And Gawker has an influence and audience that demands greater editorial restraint.

Gawker is no longer the insolent blog that began in 2003. It does important and interesting journalism about politicians, celebrities and other major public figures. This story about the former Treasury Secretary’s brother does not rise to the level that our flagship site should be publishing.

The point of this story was not in my view sufficient to offset the embarrassment to the subject and his family. Accordingly, I have had the post taken down. It is the first time we have removed a significant news story for any reason other than factual error or legal settlement.

Every story is a judgment call. As we go forward, we will hew to our mission of reporting and publishing important stories that our competitors are too timid, or self-consciously upright, to pursue. There will always be stories that critics attack as inappropriate or unjustified; and we will no doubt again offend the sensibilities of some industries or interest groups.

This action will not turn back the clock. David Geithner's embarrassment will not be eased. But this decision will establish a clear standard for future stories. It is not enough for them simply to be true. They have to reveal something meaningful. They have to be true *and* interesting. These texts were interesting, but not enough, in my view.

In light of Gawker's past rhetoric about our fearlessness and independence, this can be seen as a capitulation. And perhaps, to some extent, it is. But it is motivated by a sincere effort build a strong independent media company, and to evolve with the audience we serve.



Graby Sauce > Nick Denton  
7/17/15 3:22pm

Nick, I have been a long time reader of Gawker, and I have to say that whatever internal calculus your staff has about what news is important is completely off.

I have been surprised and turned off by "news" stories that seek to further victimize victims of bad behavior. The Christine O'Donnell story, the Hulk Hogan video, and now the Geithner story were all about \*consensual\* sexual behavior of the subjects. There is nothing particularly notable about these sexual behaviors, even potentially closeted homosexual sex if the person engaging in it is not taking advantage of another person or being a hypocrite (i.e., politicians or religious or moral figures who preach or have votes against homosexuality, but engage in homosexual behavior themselves). O'Donnell, Hogan, and Geithner are the victims of people who shared details about private, non-violent, non-criminal behavior, and in the Hogan and Geithner

cases, victims of actual crime. When Gawker publishes stories like these, you are basically **doing the dirty work of the victimizers** and making money on the backs of people who did nothing wrong.

You got it right with the celebrity nudes, so why are you so, so wrong in these other cases? There is nothing unethical about not putting private behavior on blast. We haven't lost any insight into the public personas of O'Donnell or Hogan by learning they have sexy times. We didn't even know who Geithner was before today, and even if we did, had no misguided knowledge or assumptions about his sexual behavior. Please get a consistent, ethical policy regarding stories like these.

So disappointing.



gramercypolice > Graby Sauce  
7/17/15 3:32pm

Adam has a few other thoughts on the whole thing. And things more generally. Worth a read.



IAmJumpTheShark > Graby Sauce  
7/17/15 3:33pm

Yes. And I would add that these editorial decisions make everybody writing on Gawker look like spoiled, self-righteous resented millennials. You are crucifying people for doing nothing but living their lives privately, without harming anybody else.



GoLikeHellMachine > Graby Sauce  
7/17/15 3:35pm

I had no idea that Adam Weinstein wasn't with Gawker anymore (which is a big loss on it's own), but he's got a pretty insightful perspective on what the hell is going on with Gawker as of late:

<http://adamweinstein.tumblr.com/post/124342415...>

TL;DR version is that Gawker needs a pretty big overhaul of it's editorial structure.



zeropointzero > Graby Sauce  
7/17/15 3:42pm

Well put. In my view, this isn't far removed from revenge porn - there's no reason anyone does it except to just embarrass & humiliate someone, all in the service of generating some clicks.

Also, some pretty thin reporting there - relying on the extortioner's claim that that Geithner called and said he could get this in front of the president. I mean, it could be true, but it seemed like the post was really intent on getting that in there as a hook to make this more newsworthy.

For a site that's made a big deal over Reddit's seamier and meaner precincts, this is also seamy & mean.



Dusty > Nick Denton  
7/17/15 2:43pm

I'm at such a loss over this story. It definitely should have been run, in my opinion, but maybe not by Gawker. People need to calm the eff down and stop trying to be white knights over this, considering that it wasn't long ago the pitchforks would have been out to defend the wife and fry the husband. I can't with any of what's happened, but most of all, hope Jordan doesn't suffer too much blowback. I thought this was America, where we could talk shit and point out hypocrisy. Alas, no - this rich man was a bridge too far.



Faaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaartz > Dusty  
7/17/15 2:46pm

"It definitely should have been run"

Why in the world? You need to know about the marital troubles of every family on the planet?



HelpfulCorn > Dusty  
7/17/15 2:46pm

What hypocrisy? Really, what hypocrisy? He wasn't some homophobic congressman, he was a guy hiring a prostitute that blackmailed him after he was paid because he's a fucking unhinged piece of trash.



Dusty > Faaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaartz  
7/17/15 2:47pm

If they're rich and in financial control of a media empire, living a double life as a straight family man by day and a gay plowhorse (allegedly) by night, yes.



Dusty > HelpfulCorn  
7/17/15 2:51pm

I don't disagree with what you're saying about the prozzy, but I think it takes a level of hypocrisy to live as a straight man, with a family and kids and all that, but pay for gay sex on the side. Like I said, this shouldn't have been run by Gawker, this is gossip for a different rag.



MisterMcGibblets > Nick Denton  
7/17/15 2:42pm

As terrible as publishing that in the first place was, this is worse.



Global Beet > MisterMcGibblets  
7/17/15 2:49pm

Hot takes



JonScotts > MisterMcGibblets  
7/17/15 2:49pm

"It is not enough for them simply to be true. They have to reveal something meaningful. They have to be true *and* interesting. These texts were interesting, but not enough, in my view."

Pretty subjective standard.



mozhatesme > MisterMcGibblets  
7/17/15 2:54pm

From reading other sources (HuffPo) and the anecdotes that they related about the editors being glued to phones, this feels more of "We told a story we thought you'd be ok with, but you clearly aren't so forget about it and don't be so shocked."



chuchyvila > MisterMcGibblets  
7/17/15 2:57pm

I have to admit, I wasn't expecting the reason for retraction to be "the post wasn't interesting enough"



Laisofcorinth > Nick Denton

7/17/15 2:37pm

Of all the empty gestures I've seen, this has to be the emptiest.



TheonGreycommentJoy > Nick Denton

7/17/15 2:39pm

Today I decided to unshoot the person I murdered yesterday by retracting the bullets. I think it worked about as well.

Last week I decided to undrunk drive by driving sober this morning.



crouching tiger > TheonGreycommentJoy

7/17/15 2:49pm

I completely understand your point, but public expressions of regret for bad decisions and bad behaviour actually are important. It's important for the person who is moving towards an apology, and it's important for us to see and hear.



Kim Jong's Angst > crouching tiger

7/17/15 2:55pm

Except that Denton doesn't say the words sorry or apologize once in his entire post. He doesn't regret the decision to ruin someones life, he regrets posting the story and the ensuing backlash it caused.



victrin > Nick Denton

7/17/15 2:41pm

It was not "well reported", it was basically accessory to blackmail.

The justification for removing the post should have been that it was ethically unsound, not that Geithner isn't big enough to warrant the embarrassment.

This is one of the worst non-apologies I've ever seen.



IForgotMyBurnerPassword1 > Nick Denton  
7/17/15 2:37pm

a significant news story - still don't understand how random Conde Nast dude nobody knows of allegedly getting extorted by gay prostitute is significant news story



DJ Dozier > IForgotMyBurnerPassword1  
7/17/15 2:55pm

Significant news story to Gawker equals anything that could make one of their competitors look bad. There's no way this story would have been published if it wasn't an executive at a competing company.



cob racy > DJ Dozier  
7/17/15 3:52pm

Also brother of a major financial figure. Checked a couple of grudge boxes.



Buzz Killington > IForgotMyBurnerPassword1  
7/17/15 4:10pm

The extortion plot is a decent news/gossip story. But the way Gawker handled it was fucking ass backwards.

See, they protected the identity of the criminal, and blew up the victim. Even worse, they executed the extortionist's plot by running the story when Geithner didn't cooperate.

A responsible organization would have recognized a fucking felony extortion plot when it was presented to them by a clearly disturbed prostitute, and either worked with the victim to contact the authorities and then written about it after the fact, or at the very least run the story as a blind item or in some other way that protects the identity of the victim.



titostarmaster > Buzz Killington  
7/17/15 4:25pm

What this guy said; this was some ghetto-ass 'reporting' from top to bottom.

Uh, no pun intended.





PrayForDenton · Nick Denton

7/17/15 3:02pm

I want to know is why you decided to go and publish anyway despite the sketchiness of your source, Lief Derek Truitt/Brodie Sinclair? A quick browse of his Facebook page, which the post acknowledge, makes it immediately clear that not trustworthy at best, insane at worst.



thejimhalpert · PrayForDenton

7/17/15 3:10pm

I am glad someone brought this up. I saw his FB as it was being passed around Twitter, and this dude seems unhinged.



ScottinBK · PrayForDenton

7/17/15 3:11pm

They even alluded to the fact they knew the extortionist was a headcase. But they press post anyway.



lagreewithGawker · PrayForDenton

7/17/15 3:14pm

Because Gawker has no standards, and makes the world a worse place by continuing to exist?



PrettyLegit · PrayForDenton

7/17/15 3:18pm

Because this was a way to shit on Conde Nast in some way. Given Gawkers throbbing erection for Reddit drama lately, that is probably why they pushed it so fast.



Cognos · Nick Denton

7/17/15 2:36pm

Why is the subject of the taken-down piece identified by job title and employer in the first line of this open letter?



DennyCrane · Nick Denton

7/17/15 3:25pm

This is all fine and good but I would really like to hear Tommy and Max state their positions as well. I mean, was that not the whole point of setting up the Politburo blog?



**Pbbbt** > DennyCrane

7/17/15 3:38pm

the lawyers are involved now, and probably had tommy's and max's computers, phones and tablets crushed, shot, incinerated and blown into space.

if they're good lawyers, anyway.



**ThePriceofEggsinMalta** > DennyCrane

7/17/15 4:41pm

Yeah, agreed. I would like to hear more on where everybody stood on this, and why. As it stands, it really still feels like Gawker was happy to work with a blackmailer in order to undercut a rival. I've been following several Gawker blogs for years, and have a certain affinity for them and many of their writers and editors. While I never mistook them for saints, and I never forgot that they work at a business that needs to make profits, I rather thought they'd be above that.

I'd very much like to hear the rationale behind the decisions that were made.

Realistically, though, I can't imagine we're going to hear too much more on the subject for a while. If I were Gawker's general counsel, after I edited/wrote/whatever the above piece and approved it for publication, I'd let it be known that nobody else was to say jack shit on the matter until further notice. (Though, to be fair, I am not a lawyer, so if I were Gawker's general counsel, they would be well and truly fucked.)



**DennyCrane** > ThePriceofEggsinMalta

7/17/15 5:30pm

The one thing that I really want an answer to is whether or not Gawker's legal team reviewed the story prior to publication.



**InTheStill** > DennyCrane

7/18/15 1:30am

I would guess yes but there isn't any issue with publishing something that is true. The alleged sex worker-hirer denies the correspondence but if it were actually untrue, a quick libel suit would follow. We'll see...

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