Algorithms

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WHAT IS AN ALGORITHM?

An algorithm, simply put, is a set of step-by-step instructions for solving a problem or completing a task. On the internet, algorithms are used to help organize data because there is just so much information online. Some ways we might interact with algorithms in our everyday lives include:

- They help drivers find a new route to a destination during a traffic jam
- They consider TV shows a consumer has watched on an online streaming service to help suggest other shows that might be of interest
- They help identify cheaper or faster airline flight options to get from one city to another

Algorithms are not innately good or bad. It is important to acknowledge that while algorithms are very useful in making our lives easier and safer, there are instances where algorithms can have a bad outcome. Algorithms are only as good as the data they're trained on and the commonsense guardrails put around them. This is why many Internet Works members make a concerted effort to educate users about their algorithms. Some ways our members try to deliver valuable services using algorithms include:

- **Etsy**'s search algorithm helps users find the most relevant products they are searching for in its marketplace of creators.
- **eBay** utilizes its Best Match algorithm to show users the most relevant items they are searching for, taking into account the search factors most important to the individual user.
- **Vimeo** uses AI and its algorithm to categorize the contents of a video and produce the most compelling products for its users.
- **Pinterest** uses algorithms to surface ideas and inspire Pinners with results powered by inclusive AI that enables such refinement as skin tone ranges and hair pattern.

ALGORITHMS INCREASE USER SAFETY

Internet Works members, collectively, interact with and host billions of bits of user-generated content on their sites daily. Algorithms help them sort through this massive amount of data to keep all users safe.

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Algorithms are used to ensure posts, listings, videos and more content follow the site's rules or community guidelines. They flag content that potentially breaks the rules, such as pornographic images or obscenities, and can make that content less conspicuous or keep it from other users until it's verified to be okay.

- Companies use algorithms to detect and prevent fraud. For example, **Tripadvisor** uses algorithms to detect fake reviews.
- **Reddit**'s volunteer moderators can use automated tools to detect and remove content that violates the rules of a particular community and for general purposes, like combating spam and other off-topic content. Other important Internet entities like **Wikipedia** use algorithmic tools for similar purposes, as well.
- Companies use algorithms to automatically flag content based on keywords known to be indicative of bad content, including terrorist content, CSAM, hate speech and misinformation.

ALGORITHMS PROVIDE USER CHOICE

Algorithms can help tailor a user's online experience to make it more efficient and meaningful. They help users benefit from the wisdom of crowds by breaking down the online world into smaller sections that make more sense:

- Real estate websites use algorithms to suggest homes that meet a consumer's preference for number of bedrooms, price range and preferred schools.
- Travel sites use algorithms to show consumers hotels that have availability or rental cars in that same destination city which might be on sale.
- Job websites use algorithms to best match job seekers with relevant jobs they are most likely to want and be qualified for; because many job seekers only enter a geographic area and not a specific job type when they search for work, algorithms enable more effective matching for job seekers.
- Video platforms use algorithms to improve users' experience and enable them to create better content, for example, by providing stock footage video suggestions or enhancing video creation automation.
- Event technology platforms use algorithms to help event-goers find the most relevant live experiences in their area.

Thanks to Section 230, Internet Works members and others have the flexibility to use algorithms to help develop tools catered to their users' needs and wants. They can make the online experience easy and better for everyone.

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