“It Was A Matter of Life and Death”: A YouTube Engineer's Decision to Alter Data in the 'It Gets Better Project’

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Part 1

The It Gets Better Project (IGBP) is an international non-profit that aims to provide messages of hope to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-identified (LGBTQ) youth who are struggling with social stigma. Launched by sex advice columnist Dan Savage and his husband Terry Miller shortly after several well-publicized suicides by LGBTQ teens, the project began with online videos of adults sharing stories of their lives improving in adulthood and encouraging LGBTQ teens to not commit self-harm. As their original video gained attention, the flood of similar videos from the public and celebrities far surpassed the limited number of videos that YouTube allowed any channel to post at the time. Carol Chen, a queer-identified YouTube engineer who was personally supportive of the IGBP and believed it would save lives, had the ability to alter YouTube’s database to allow more videos in the IGBP channel. Chen hoped that would prevent IGBP’s momentum from stalling. However, such changes

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carried significant risk for the rest of YouTube’s database and would have to be done outside of normal engineering quality control. To come to a conclusion about the correct path, Chen had to navigate challenging ethical terrain normally considered outside of the scope of engineering ethics, including consideration of the corporate culture at YouTube and Google, her responsibilities to colleagues and YouTube users, and contentious public policy issues.

“It Gets Better Project” Overview

On July 9, 2010, self-identified gay teenager Justin Aaberg committed suicide in his Anoka, Minnesota bedroom. Aaberg was a frequent victim of sexual orientation-based peer harassment and bullying in his high school, and he came to represent one of dozens of youth suicides recently spotlighted in international news coverage of a growing suicide epidemic. In response to Aaberg’s suicide and the suicide of Greensberg, Indiana teenager Billy Lucas, who was merely perceived to be gay by his high school classmates, sex columnist Dan Savage and his husband Terry Miller created the YouTube-based It Gets Better Project (IGBP) on September 16, 2010.

To launch their YouTube channel, Savage and Miller filmed an eight-and-a-half minute video discussing the challenges they faced as bullied youth, followed by in-depth discussion of the joys and successes they experienced as adults (see Exhibit 1). Shortly after posting the video to YouTube, in his Seattle Stranger weekly column, “Savage Love,” Savage called upon other LGBTQ adults to share their survival stories and messages of hope with at-risk youth on the social media platform as well (see Exhibit 2).

Savage and Miller decided to use YouTube precisely because they wanted to reach suicidal LGBTQ youth where they are spending time; and increasingly that means online. Youth 14-18 years old are the demographic most likely to use YouTube – and the most frequent to do so; and Nielsen disclosed that 18-34 year olds’ YouTube content consumption has now surpassed their traditional media consumption, including cable television.

Today, It Gets Better YouTube videos are just one component of a global anti-bullying social movement spearheaded by the IGBP that includes:

- A strong social media presence across multiple platforms (Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Tumblr, and Twitter);
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- Two Emmy-nominated IGBP television specials on MTV;
- Google Hangout sessions “to discuss issues important to LGBT young people including coming out, the experience of trans* people, and LGBT participation in sports;”
- Multiple seasons of the “It Got Better” Docuseries;
- Data to support ongoing legal battles for equality; and
- An array of IGBP merchandise, including t-shirts, hats, and an official IGBP book (see Exhibit 3).

As an official 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the IGBP has advocated for frequent and more accurate national and international media coverage of LGBTQ-specific harassment, bullying, and suicide as well as associated local, state, and federal policy changes. Bolstered by Savage’s fame and access to multiple mainstream and alternative media outlets, the IGBP has received media attention far greater than that of most social movements originating online.1

The ability to easily add one’s voice to the vastly expansive media landscape is one benefit of online-based social media platforms, and many marginalized groups have found and/or expanded community through identifying and communicating with others demographically similar to themselves (i.e., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, age, [dis]ability, religion, political affiliation, etc.). For LGBTQ individuals, particularly youth living in areas with virtually no easily-accessible offline LGBTQ resources – let alone awareness of what resources do exist – part of their initial understanding of what it means to be LGBTQ often comes from the media.10 According to the Pew Research Center, increasingly the Internet is the main source of information for “tech-saturated” teens.11

**YouTube Analytics Engineer Carol Chen**

Carol Chen is a queer-identified engineer who joined YouTube as an Analytics Engineer specializing in abuse and fraud detection. Her job entailed analyzing patterns and trends within large amounts of data, and in this role, she had to “watch tons of just mind-blowingly stupid videos.” Chen first learned about the IGBP from a controversial debate unfolding on Google’s internal message board:
“People were talking about this project, and I think the immediate reactions of some people were, ‘Oh my God - that Dan Savage is an asshole! He did this and that. He’s racist; he’s sexist.’ And then there were other people saying, ‘Look, you should separate who he is and what this project is doing. The project is doing good things; you can’t discount that just because you don’t like its creator.’ So that’s when I first learned about that [IGBP], from some internal dialogue at Google.”

Simply learning about yet another YouTube-based project didn’t mean that the IGBP would resonate with Chen. Rather, in that vast sea of “mind-blowingly stupid videos,” it was the IGBP’s message and mission that resonated with Chen because, as she proclaimed, “It’s good to have something that’s meaningful and interesting for a change, that actually has content.” Chen started following the IGBP both in the news and “under the hood” at YouTube.

When watching the IGBP videos on YouTube, Chen was transported back to being bullied by her peers at the age of six. On her first day of elementary school in Taiwan, Chen was verbally harassed and physically assaulted by classmates: “The very first day [of school], kids called me crazy, and when I came back home I got a giant bump on my head because a kid threw a rock at me from behind.”

When probed for information about the verbal and physical assaults, Chen explained that it was a result of her non-conforming gender identity and expression, and she shared how she strategized to no longer be victimized by her peers:

“I grew up in Taiwan, and I was always very butch. I’m probably in a lot of people’s definition transgender, male-identified...When I was a kid, those are the things I had to do to protect myself. I’d make friends with the most dangerous kids so that nobody would beat me up - and being popular means I wouldn’t be targeted. I think throughout my childhood, when I was six years old and having a rock thrown at me, that was the beginning of understanding that there was a giant target on my back, and I had to get rid of that. I’m lucky; I was a smart kid. I developed all sorts of techniques. I had a massive personality and personal skills to get rid of the target on my back. I became very popular so that I was safe.”

After learning about the IGBP, Chen decided to write a script for her own IGBP video; practiced verbalizing it a few times; and then turned the camera on herself while sitting in her kitchen (see Exhibit 4). Chen then emailed the video to Savage for him to upload it onto the official IGBP YouTube channel. Afterward, Chen watched the YouTube videos pile onto
Savage and Miller’s channel and became “very fascinated with the project.” As Chen describes it:

“I watched all the videos that Dan posted. He posted more every day, and at a certain time, he stopped and the pattern stopped. I had his email because I submitted a video, and I corresponded with him. So I asked Dan what was wrong; told him that I was a YouTube engineer; and asked if maybe I could help. Dan was in panic mode and said he couldn’t add more videos [to the IGBP YouTube channel], and that’s when I went back to try to figure out what’s going on and talked to program managers to see if there was a quick-fix to the situation.”

**Altering the System**

In considering shifts in media consumption and heavy adoption of digital tools for production, corporations who own these platforms, such as Google’s YouTube, now play an increasingly larger role in social change efforts such as the IGBP. But behind every digital platform are rules and programmed logic that regulate how the system operates. YouTube channels were designed to enable curators to manually monitor submissions and choose which to approve.

In the IGBP’s earliest stages, Savage was manually reviewing, approving, and uploading all of the user-submitted IGBP videos to the YouTube channel – and he was working around the clock as the IGBP’s gatekeeper to keep pace. Chen highlighted the importance of how viewers found the IGBP videos, based on trends that exist on YouTube:

“I’m an analytics engineer; we look at trends, patterns, massive amounts of data, and we determine what it all means. You get a massive amount of video coming in and it needs to be found. If you want the trend to get going, you need people to be able to see what other people have said and then they can make a decision based on what they’re going to post, how they’re going to voice their opinions, how they’re going to do their own videos. So what Dan was doing was basically being an editor for the content. It’s important to have an editor for the content because of the massive amount of various quality video that came in, and I think the news items gave people a sense of urgency.”
As national and international media outlets continued to bring greater awareness of the IGBP to prospective video consumers and producers worldwide, Savage and Miller faced several technical hurdles concerning storage capacity for their IGBP YouTube channel. Within just two weeks of its launch, the IGBP YouTube channel exceeded the Google-defined storage capacity of 650 videos, and no more videos could be posted without direct intervention from people within the company.

In speaking with colleagues at YouTube, Chen learned that the “fix” to the bottleneck Savage and Miller were facing would not happen “until the next push” because of the time associated with writing, testing, and implementing that code. As Chen explained it, Savage was not a technically-minded person, and his inbox was overflowing with video submissions from around the world. The IGBP’s founders were in a race against the clock to continue capitalizing on the momentum generated by Savage and the alternative and mainstream media coverage.

Chen contemplated what – if anything – YouTube could do to help the rapidly growing social movement continue its momentum. Chen knew the risks associated with altering YouTube data, as “breaking data is a chain reaction; you don’t know how far the chain will go.” But to Chen, the IGBP was not just another YouTube-based project; it was literally saving people’s lives:

“People killing themselves was not news to us; it had been going on forever. But it was suddenly in focus, and they realized that people are dying all the time. With videos like this, the It Gets Better Project, we have solid evidence that these videos did save lives.”

Thus, Chen faced an ethical dilemma: Should she:

a) Single-handedly alter YouTube’s database to allow Savage to add more videos to the IGBP channel without fully knowing what the consequences would be to the entire platform; OR

b) Wait for her colleagues to make the required platform coding changes in the next couple of months, as planned?
Part 2: Chen’s Decision

Savage and Miller set an initial goal of receiving 100 messages about life improving for LGBTQ youth. But within just two weeks of establishing the IGBP YouTube channel, videos were cascading into Savage’s inbox from both amateur and professional video producers alike, in addition to unsolicited videos featuring LGBTQ-identified celebrities or allies. As Chen recalled:

“At that time, the It Gets Better Project was taking off really, really quickly. I felt that the momentum needed to be pepped. I can’t just let them [Savage and Miller] add just two videos a day because more and more were coming in at an exponential rate.”

Because of her personal connection to the project, Chen decided to alter the YouTube system in an attempt to alleviate the bottleneck Savage and Miller were facing. To fix the problem, Chen wrote and tested some code that backdated Savage and Miller’s YouTube channel from 2010 to 2004. By changing the channel’s start date, she allotted Savage and Miller significantly more storage capacity in order to upload more IGBP videos onto their channel. This fixed the problem, but it was a dangerous move for Chen because it risked harming other areas of the database and causing significant engineering problems for her employer and colleagues:

“The mainframe structure is not like I can just go to the database and change the numbers; it’s not trivial, actually. As an abuse engineer, I have a lot of access to the data, but I still need to write some code to actually access that raw layer. It’s a very raw layer; you can’t just access it. It did take some work. I tested it and everything, obviously – but it was a risky thing to do. It was a very risky thing to do. It was a small thing to do, but it was risky to the database!”

Chen’s decision to alter the YouTube data was influenced by several factors. To better understand her motivations for doing so, it is imperative to examine the following three factors in greater depth:

1) Chen’s personal connection to the IGBP;
2) The corporate cultures of both Google and YouTube; and
3) The timing of Chen’s actions.

**Chen’s Personal Connection to the IGBP**

When reflecting upon her time working at YouTube and the role she played in the first month of the IGBP’s launch, Chen divulged that watching others’ IGBP videos felt like “a lot of that was just my story. It was stories that were all too familiar, and it definitely struck a chord.” Ironically, when initially watching Savage and Miller’s IGBP video, Chen didn’t immediately relate to their experiences – or to the IGBP more broadly – because she wasn’t bullied in middle and high school like Savage, Miller, or their intended audience. Later Chen realized why she wasn’t bullied beyond elementary school because of how she strategized to avoid being bullied, and how those experiences fundamentally shaped her into the person that she is today:

“I made a video because I was trying to help, just like everybody who made a video. I made a video because I thought I could offer a perspective, not technically on how not to get attacked but how to be popular and not get attacked. These days, you look at high school kids and a lot of very popular kids are gay and they dominate the high school. I wanted to offer people perspective on how you can do that.”

But Chen quickly realized that she had the power to do far more than just create her own IGBP video. By risking damage to YouTube’s database she could help the IGBP just as it was gaining international momentum. In addition to her personal connection with the IGBP, Chen had the technical acumen to intervene given her position within a corporation with what she characterized as a “feel-good kind of brand image.”

**Google and YouTube Overview**

With a mission of “organizing the world’s information and making it universally accessible and useful,” Google is a technology conglomerate with multiple subsidiaries, many of which
have been added to Google’s brand portfolio in the past decade through acquisitions. “

Founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin in Mountain View, CA in 1998 as a search engine, Google (now structured under a new parent company, Alphabet) has more than 40,000 employees in offices located on six continents.

Chen described Google as a “rainbow and pony kind of company that is very rare.” Page and Brin were “deeply influenced by the culture in the Bay Area [of California],” which Chen defined as “be-nice, hippy kind of culture.” Chen explained that engineers know that they have the company’s trust when they are in the frequent position of having to make difficult decisions to keep Google’s numerous platforms fully operational. That organizational trust was instrumental to Chen’s decision: “I knew that we had a culture where if something happens and you’ve got to make a decision, then make a decision. As long as you can defend it and you feel that it’s the right thing to do, then you won’t be blamed.”

Chen characterized the culture of Google’s subsidiary YouTube as “a lot more entrepreneurial” than Google at the time, which meant that it functioned similarly to a start-up and allotted for and encouraged more risk-taking among its employees. At YouTube, a higher level of experimental playfulness was expected from its engineers during Chen’s tenure, as compared to engineers working at other Google subsidiaries:

“YouTube is a massive project but YouTube is a less mission-critical project. So if YouTube goes down for half an hour, that’s not going to generate as much outcry as Google Search going down for half an hour or Gmail going down. YouTube making a mistake is a lot less damaging – and almost all the engineers before me had made massive mistakes that broke the site badly. So breaking the site was not really that big of a deal... YouTube is less strict about quality.”

Because of YouTube’s corporate culture, Chen did not receive much pushback internally from her colleagues when she altered the data: “My team-lead was a little irked. People were a little shocked, a little irked, but that’s about it. But nobody said anything bad.” In fact, Chen was praised by some of her Google colleagues: “Internally, at least at Google by the gays, I was highly regarded for that matter because people were pretty shocked at what I did.”

Chen’s technical changes did not cause YouTube to temporarily shut down – or any of the other myriad negative outcomes that could have resulted from her actions. Rather, Chen
arguably prevented IGBP from stalling due to technical limitations in the YouTube platform. At the time, Chen believed that the IGBP had the potential to save lives in the U.S. – and felt that alone was reason enough for her to intervene:

“I felt that if I was called out for it [at YouTube], I will just tell them that it’s a matter of life and death. That is just what needed to be done. I personally felt that it was a matter of life and death, and if we can save people’s lives, then that’s a high priority.”

The Timing of Chen’s Actions

Although Google had a “massively engineering-centric culture” at the time when Chen decided to proverbially tinker under the YouTube hood, a shift was taking place in Google’s famously experimental and entrepreneurial corporate culture rooted in trust:

“When I changed the data for the ‘It Gets Better Project,’ that trust was kind of already going away because of lawsuits. It’s not like Google doesn’t want to trust its engineers, but... for a big corporation that’s liable for lawsuits, any mistake will be magnified in the press. These things have to be carefully done, unfortunately. Corporations have to go through lawyers for everything.”

Subsequently, both Chen’s personal connection with the IGBP and the corporate cultures of both Google and YouTube that she was a part of strongly contributed to her decision to alter YouTube’s data in order to accommodate the IGBP. Moreover, timing also greatly contributed to her decision to do so.

When Savage and Miller founded the IGBP YouTube channel, the couple did so using a social media platform owned by an LGBTQ-affirmative corporation that has been on the top of recent national and international indices for LGBTQ-friendliness. Shortly after Chen altered the YouTube data, several Google employees – many of whom were part of Google’s LGBTQ employee group, colloquially known as the Gayglers – filmed and uploaded an unofficially sanctioned corporate video in support of the IGBP. At the time of filming, Google had not officially sanctioned the IGBP, and as a result, its lawyers limited what the Gayglers could do and say in their video:
“We couldn’t wear a t-shirt that had a Google logo on it because it was not officially sanctioned, which later changed. At that point, it was just a bunch of people going like, ‘Let’s do this video!’ The lawyers said, ‘You can mention you work for Google, but you can’t say this was Google’s decision. And you can’t wear a t-shirt with a Google logo on it, but you can wear a t-shirt with two Android robots holding hands and waving a little Gay Pride flag,’ which was our t-shirt for the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade. It was quite early and just when things were picking up. So like a lot of things, corporations are slow to respond to things.”

In late October 2010, Google officially sanctioned the IGBP and made a $50,000 contribution to one of the IGBP’s benefactors, nonprofit organization The Trevor Project, which focuses on suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth. Five months later in April 2011, Google partnered with London-based advertising agency Bartle Bogle and Hegarty (BBH) to create a mainstream television commercial prominently featuring the IGBP as part of an ongoing ad campaign for Google’s web browser, Chrome (see Exhibit 5). Google’s IGBP commercial was awarded a 2011 GLAAD Amplifier Award for “Outstanding TV Campaign – Mainstream Market” from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), a media watchdog organization, and that commercial remains a rare example of LGBTQ inclusive mainstream advertising still today.

Reflecting on the five years she spent as a YouTube Analytics Engineer, Chen is pleased with the behind-the-scenes role that she played in the IGBP:

“I’m very proud of having been able to help. I feel that Dan did something that was absolutely genius. We already have the tools. The thing about being at YouTube, you provide the tools to people and you see how people can do amazing things, absolutely amazing things with them. That’s the beauty of humanity; people are creative. One person can come up with something in one part of the world and it can spread like wildfire worldwide. Sometimes it’s a stupid dance like ‘Gangnam Style.’ Sometimes it’s wonderful things like the ‘It Gets Better Project.’ That was one of the highlights of my career at Google: doing something that made a difference.”
Conclusion

Today, the IGBP has its own website, complete with a searchable archive containing thousands of IGBP videos, the “It Got Better” docuseries, and links to several resources for suicidal LGBTQ individuals of all ages. The IGBP YouTube channel contains more than 50,000 video messages from LGBTQ-identified individuals and allies around the world, and to date the IGBP videos have been viewed more than 50 million times (see bit.ly/1igaOFo).

While the channel expanded by Chen still exists, the project’s hub is now located at www.itgetsbetter.org, and the IGBP now has major corporate sponsors, including Wells Fargo, West Elm, Doritos, and Uber (see Exhibit 6). Nonetheless, without the quick decision-making and code implementation of Carol Chen, perhaps none of the above would exist.

From a technical perspective, Chen’s decision to alter the YouTube data was relatively modest. Nonetheless, to achieve that technical change and facilitate rapid expansion of the IGBP library, Chen had to address some thorny professional and political dynamics and violate engineering best practices for testing and approving such changes along the way. Engineers—perhaps especially engineers working for Internet services like YouTube—sometimes must navigate challenging social and ethical problems in order to solve what appear to be even simple technical problems. We often tend to think of ethical decision making as a matter of deciding “yes” or “no” about an action. However, this case illustrates that careful ethical decision-making sometimes starts with navigating the complicated terrain around what appears to be a binary technical choice, and that engineers are well-served by understanding the social and political contexts of their users and colleagues.

Open Questions

In this case study, Chen’s decision to alter the data and change the date on the IGBP channel had no serious repercussions for her, YouTube, or Google, and her actions only benefitted the project. Consider, instead, what could have happened.

1) What if Chen’s database fix backfired and changed the restrictions on all channels?

2) What if the It Gets Better campaign inadvertently had negative implications for youth and increased the likelihood of suicide attempts?
3) What if Chen had been fired for her actions?

4) What if the topic of the campaign had had a different socio-political valence? (e.g., an anti-abortion campaign, a fundamentalist religious campaign, etc.?)

EXHIBIT 1: Dan Savage & Terry Miller’s Original IGBP Video

Video URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IcVyyg2Qlo
Savage Love
Give ’Em Hope
by Dan Savage

I just read about a gay teenager in Indiana—Billy Lucas—who killed himself after being taunted by his classmates. Now his Facebook memorial page is being defaced by people posting homophobic comments. It’s just heartbreaking and sickening. What the hell can we do?

Gay Bullying Victim Who Survived

Another gay teenager in another small town has killed himself—hope you’re pleased with yourselves, Tony Perkins and all the other "Christians" out there who oppose anti-bullying programs (and give actual Christians a bad name).

Billy Lucas was just 15 when he hanged himself in a barn on his grandmother's property. He reportedly endured intense bullying at the hands of his classmates—classmates who called him a fag and told him to kill himself. His mother found his body.

Nine out of 10 gay teenagers experience bullying and harassment at school, and gay teens are four times likelier to attempt suicide. Many LGBT kids who do kill themselves live in rural areas, exurbs, and suburban areas, places with no gay organizations or services for queer kids.
"My heart breaks for the pain and torment you went through, Billy Lucas," a reader wrote after I posted about Billy Lucas to my blog. "I wish I could have told you that things get better."

I had the same reaction: I wish I could have talked to this kid for five minutes. I wish I could have told Billy that it gets better. I wish I could have told him that, however bad things were, however isolated and alone he was, it gets better.

But gay adults aren't allowed to talk to these kids. Schools and churches don't bring us in to talk to teenagers who are being bullied. Many of these kids have homophobic parents who believe that they can prevent their gay children from growing up to be gay—or from ever coming out—by depriving them of information, resources, and positive role models.

Why are we waiting for permission to talk to these kids? We have the ability to talk directly to them right now. We don't have to wait for permission to let them know that it gets better. We can reach these kids.

So here's what you can do, GBVWS: Make a video. Tell them it gets better.
I’ve launched a channel on YouTube—www.youtube.com/itgetsbetterproject—to host these videos. My normally camera-shy husband and I already posted one. We both went to Christian schools and we were both bullied—he had it a lot worse than I did—and we are living proof that it gets better. We don’t dwell too much on the past. Instead, we talk mostly about all the meaningful things in our lives now—our families, our friends (gay and straight), the places we’ve gone and things we’ve experienced—that we would’ve missed out on if we’d killed ourselves then.

"You gotta give ’em hope," Harvey Milk said.

Today we have the power to give these kids hope. We have the tools to reach out to them and tell our stories and let them know that it does get better. Online support groups are great, GLSEN does amazing work, the Trevor Project is invaluable. But many LGBT youth can’t picture what their lives might be like as openly gay adults. They can’t imagine a future for themselves. So let’s show them what our lives are like, let’s show them what the future may hold in store for them.
The video my husband and I made is up now—all by itself. I'd like to add submissions from other gay and lesbian adults—singles and couples, with kids or without, established in careers or just starting out, urban and rural, of all races and religious backgrounds. (Go to www.youtube.com/itgetsbetterproject to find instructions for submitting your video.) If you're gay or lesbian or bi or trans and you've ever read about a kid like Billy Lucas and thought, "Fuck, I wish I could've told him that it gets better," this is your chance. We can’t help Billy, but there are lots of other Billys out there—other despairing LGBT kids who are being bullied and harassed, kids who don't think they have a future—and we can help them.

They need to know that it gets better. Submit a video. Give them hope.

mail@savagelove.net

EXHIBIT 3: Resources Available on the IGBP Website

MTV Specials

In 2012, MTV and Logo aired two one-hour specials It Gets Better. The Emmy-nominated specials tell the inspirational stories of extraordinary LGBT young people as they discover how it gets better.

Google Hangouts

With help from our friends at Google+, It Gets Better regularly hosts Hangouts to discuss issues important to LGBT young people including coming out, the experience of trans* people, and LGBT participation in sports.

It Got Better Docuseries

We’re thrilled to introduce “It Got Better,” an online docuseries in collaboration with Dan Bucatinsky, Lisa Kudrow and LStudio. The series features notable LGBT figures sharing their personal stories of struggle and success.

Website URL: http://www.itgetsbetter.org/content/media
Enhancing Advocacy for LGBT Youth

BEETLELegal leverages the library of over 50,000 user-generated it gets better videos that have been created in support of the It Gets Better Project. In offering their it gets better stories, contributors from around the world representing all ages, races, religions, nationalities, gender identities and sexual orientations provide invaluable, personal accounts of a variety of experiences in the LGBT community. These range from the challenges faced as youth with families and in schools, to those faced as adults with same-sex relationships, parenting, immigration, discrimination and more.

With this diverse collection of stories, BEETLELegal is able to offer access to an enormous, first-of-its-kind content library showcasing the real-life experiences of LGBT people and their allies. These videos can be used to support advocacy efforts undertaken by legal services organizations, by illustrating issues in a manner that is compelling both in the courtroom and the community.

Legal Services Organizations

Legal services organizations participating in BEETLELegal submit requests for it gets better videos. Each request describes the issue that the videos are meant to illustrate, and the context in which the videos will be used; for instance, citation in a legal brief or use in community education materials.

BEETLELegal volunteers then select a collection of it gets better videos tailored to the request. The videos are provided to the organization with information explaining why the videos were chosen. The materials generated by the organization using the videos may then be highlighted through the It Gets Better Project's popular social media outlets to draw further attention to the legal services organization's work.

There is no cost for legal services organizations to participate in BEETLELegal.

- REGISTER YOUR ORGANIZATION | REQUEST A VIDEO
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Lawyers
BETTERLegal aims to improve advocacy by educating the legal profession about issues relevant to the It Gets Better Project, such as cyberbullying and legal issues confronting LGBT youth. Educational opportunities are available to certain program sponsors in the form of in-house presentations, and are a component of the volunteer training program.

- BECOME A SPONSOR | VOLUNTEER

Volunteers
BETTERLegal volunteers are trained to search the It Gets Better Project’s video library to find content that supports pro-LGBT advocacy efforts. Additionally, they learn about intellectual property, digital media and evidentiary issues important for using online video content in various forms of legal advocacy. BETTERLegal is structured to allow volunteers to participate whenever they are available, and from any location around the world.

- VOLUNTEER

Website URL: [http://www.itgetsbetter.org/content/betterlegal](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/content/betterlegal)
“It Was A Matter of Life and Death”: A YouTube Engineer’s Decision to Alter Data in the ‘It Gets Better Project’

Website URL: [http://store.itgetsbetter.org/](http://store.itgetsbetter.org/)
EXHIBIT 4: Carol Chen’s IGBP Video

Uploaded on Oct 2, 2010
For the It Gets Better Project: a personal story of a nerdy Chinese butch.

Stick around! We need you to stick around. Stick around to vote, to use your economic power. Stick around to volunteer. Stick around to tell your story.

You do not have to hide who you are. My family member told me I will never get a job if I go to interviews looking like this. He was wrong! I got five job offers and eventually moved to San Francisco to work for Google.

In fact, after I got my first job, I was told that they wanted to hire me because I was very weird but confident. I acted like I did not care what they think of me.

PS. I should mention that I work as a YouTube engineer, that’s this site! So that’s my contribution. You can also check out what I do in my other videos. I’ve become so many things I never dreamed about when I was a teen. I am a maker, woodworker, skateboarder, skater, cabaret singer, motorcyclist, dog lover, pool player, and I have been a dancer, gardener, visual artist, etc. I have met countless awesome and interesting people. I had been on top of one major trading pits on the exchange floor next to shouting traders. I’m featured on the official YouTube’s career videos. Dated super hot chick that I thought was way out of my league. My life is constantly changing. I look forward to my next projects and new people I’ll meet.

Category: People & blogs
License: Standard YouTube License

Video URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4wWk5aXXYs
EXHIBIT 5: Bartle Bogle Hegarty’s Google Chrome Commercial Featuring the IGBP

Video URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAKtEIzPBho
EXHIBIT 6: The IGBP Website’s Homepage

Website URL: http://www.itgetsbetter.org/
References


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14 Ibid.


"It Was A Matter of Life and Death": A YouTube Engineer's Decision to Alter Data in the 'It Gets Better Project'


The Data & Society Research Institute Program on Ethics in “Big Data” Research will investigate the potential benefits and challenges put forward in this primer. Through partnerships, collaboration, original research, and technology development, the program seeks cooperation across sectors to innovate and implement thoughtful, balanced, and evidence-based responses to our current and future data-centered issues.

Data & Society is a research institute in New York City that is focused on social, cultural, and ethical issues arising from data-centric technological development. To provide frameworks that can help address emergent tensions, D&S is committed to identifying issues at the intersection of technology and society, providing research that can ground public debates, and building a network of researchers and practitioners that can offer insight and direction. To advance public understanding of the issues, D&S brings together diverse constituencies, hosts events, does directed research, creates policy frameworks, and builds demonstration projects that grapple with the challenges and opportunities of a data-saturated world.

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