

The end of the internet abuse of the public

- [Neal Rothschild](#)
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Google's [overhaul](#) of the search bar this week washes away one of the last vestiges of the internet's halcyon era — when search tools felt empowering, social media and swiping were novel, and popular disillusionment had yet to set in.

Why it matters: The AI era and the TikTok-ification of social media have produced a digital world that's responsive to the market demands of today and unrecognizable from a decade ago.

In heralding the "biggest upgrade to our Search box in over 25 years,"

Google [acknowledged](#) that search was a model of the past and that its core product had to be more aligned with the AI age.

- The blue links that colored the Google user experience for decades have been demoted to a secondary offering as zero-click answers get top billing.
- [Publishers](#), SEO firms, affiliate marketers and review sites built around Google traffic are now fighting for visibility in a search experience that delivers fewer clicks.

The big picture: Americans' trust in Big Tech has plunged over the last 15 years, forcing drastic shifts from the status quo alongside technological advancements.

- The share of Americans with a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in big tech companies was only 24% in 2025, down from 32% in 2020, according to [Gallup polling](#).
- Between 2015 and 2019, the percent of Americans who said tech companies have a positive effect on the country plunged from 71% to 50%, [according to Pew polling](#).
- Go back even further and tech companies topped a [2010 Pew poll](#) of the most favorable institutions, on par with small business.

Platforms have sought changes in response to the dissatisfaction and fatigue.

- The popularity of YouTube and TikTok have pushed other platforms like Facebook, Instagram and X to serve content based on what it thinks users want rather than which accounts they've proactively followed.
- Even [dating apps](#) are wearing thin, particularly for Gen Z. Bumble CEO Whitney Wolfe Herd [told](#) "The Axios Show" that the company is planning to remove the 'swipe' as part of an overhaul of the app.

The intrigue: The companies that built the early internet are the ones speeding to disrupt it in order to avoid being the disruptees of the AI age.

- [Google](#) and [Meta](#) are infusing AI into existing products and upending the user experience for products generating hundreds of billions of dollars before establishing what the next business model looks like.

The bottom line: Polling suggests Americans [remain skeptical](#) of Big Tech even as companies push aggressively into AI products.