

FINANCIAL TIMES

May 14, 2014 12:56 pm

Google admirer delivers bitter defeat on principle of privacy

By Tobias Buck in Madrid



Share ▾



Author alerts ▾



Print



Clip



Comments

Mario Costeja González insists he has nothing against Google and its flagship search engine. He describes himself as a “fan” of the US group and offers lavish praise for its broader stance in the battle to further freedom of expression.

Yet his four-year legal crusade to force Google to remove links to certain, potentially embarrassing, internet content has now culminated in a bitter defeat for one of the world’s most powerful corporations. It is a loss that has the potential to reshape core parts of the internet economy, from search engines to social networks. It is unlikely that Google executives will reciprocate the affection that the 59-year old Spaniard claims to have for their company.

A graphologist who has his own consultancy on non-verbal communication, Mr Costeja González’s campaign started in 2010, when he realised that a Google search of his name threw up a link to a January 1998 article in La Vanguardia, the Barcelona-based newspaper. The piece gave details of the auction of a house he used to own, and which he had been forced to sell to settle outstanding debts. He was annoyed and alarmed, fearing consequences for his business and private life. “It is a disagreeable thing that I have to explain without it being necessary,” he told a Spanish paper.

Mr Costeja González says his dogged persistence – he pursued his claim all the way to Spain’s highest court, which eventually asked the European Court of Justice for guidance – has nothing to do with money. He insists he wants “not one cent” from Google, and is not even looking to recoup his legal costs.

For him, the ruling is all about the principle of privacy. “There is data [on the internet] that is

not relevant and that affects your dignity and your private life,” he told the Financial Times after Tuesday’s ruling. As for Google, he insists that the group will actually benefit from the change. Its search results, says Mr Costeja González, will now be more relevant than ever.

RELATED TOPICS Internet privacy, United States of America

 Share ▾

 Author alerts ▾

 Print

 Clip

 Comments



Keep faith in Super Mario



Investor discontent at CEO pay



Your oil questions answered

Printed from: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fca8f7f8-db53-11e3-94ad-00144feabdc0.html>

Print a single copy of this article for personal use. Contact us if you wish to print more to distribute to others.

© THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2016 FT and ‘Financial Times’ are trademarks of The Financial Times Ltd.