



Two Minute Challenge: Flitter and Freedom

You are CEO of Flitter, a social media company that allows users to share short messages. As a popular blog recently stated, “Flitter famously publishes government data requests and positions itself as the voice of freedom in oppressed nations.”

Your legal team has come to you with an important issue that requires your immediate attention. There is an ongoing civil war in Googistan, and rebels are targeting the dictator. A local blogger used Flitter to publicize the location of the dictator, having recognized him as he entered a government building in disguise. This information could be used to stage a rebel attack. The rebels have used Flitter in the past for communication, but never for such vital tactical information. The Googistan government has ordered Flitter to take the post down immediately. The government has warned if the website does not comply, it will block all access to Flitter in the country, and may take other steps as well.

Flitter's policies state that information previously available to the public is not to be removed. Some members of Legal argue that if the blogger saw the dictator in public and recognized him, the information was already public and thus should not be removed. Others are hesitant about appearing to take a side in the conflict and want to avoid any governmentally-imposed consequences. Also, they argue that if Flitter gets blocked by the government, not only will it censor the Flit in question, but millions of other Flits as well. What do you do?

Issues	Rules and Regulations	Questions
Flitter’s central corporate dedication to free speech	Googistan’s laws governing social media (Could your company be committing a crime?)	Are there any ways you can compromise with the Googistan government?
The lives of thousands involved in the war and oppression by the government	The US Constitution, applicable rules	Will they negotiate? Do they care? Do they have to come to the table?
Financial repercussions if Googistan blocks your service in the country	Googistan legal policy	How will this affect the war? Does Flitter support the war? Does that matter?
	Your CSR report, Code of Ethics, mission statement	What are the reputational concerns? What would “the world” think? The US government? Might you be able to generate enough pressure that the government will back down? What are the legal issues involved? Is jail time for local employees possible? Likely?





Resources

US Embassy in Googistan

Flitter's legal team

Trusted friends and colleagues within the industry

Flitter's CSR reports and vision

Options

Take down the Flit per the government's request.

Leave up the Flit and face the possibility of having the website blacked out in the country

Try to negotiate with the government to find a compromise

Speak directly to the blogger about possible ways to continue his communications without risking censorship of the website

Takeaway Lessons:

1.) It is sometimes impossible to reconcile the needs/desires of all stakeholders.

2.) What level of commitment do you have to your core values? Are there limits to them? How do you reconcile your commitment to the values?

