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NewsClips

October 6, 2017

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**pennlive.com**  
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**Philadelphia Inquirer**  
[No budget deal? No problem. 'I can do this indefinitely,' Wolf says](#)

**Philadelphia Inquirer**  
[Calling out Trump,](#)

Netflix Inc. is raising prices for its streaming-video services in the U.S., betting that subscribers will tolerate higher monthly fees and help fuel the company's big investments in TV and movie programming. As of Thursday, Netflix's price for new subscribers went up by \$1 to \$10.99 a month for its standard plan, which allows two concurrent streams. The premium plan allowing four concurrent streams went up \$2 to \$13.99 a month. The basic plan will continue to cost \$7.99. The price increases will be rolled out in coming months to Netflix's roughly 50 million current U.S. customers.

Netflix, whose roster of shows includes "The Crown" and "Stranger Things," is [spending huge amounts on content](#). It expects a budget of some \$7 billion next year as it battles other streaming players and high-end cable channels for supremacy in the new era of television. Rival Hulu took home best drama at this year's Emmy Awards for "The Handmaid's Tale"—becoming [the first streaming service to win](#) the coveted prize. Amazon.com is ratcheting up its own spending to lure talent and create original shows. New players are on the horizon, with Apple Inc. [looking to spend roughly \\$1 billion](#) to procure and produce original content over the next year.

That high-octane business model puts pressure on Netflix to [continue to add subscribers](#), and periodically raise their prices—especially if the streaming giant hopes to increase what until now have been relatively small profit margins. "From time to time, Netflix plans and pricing are adjusted as we add more exclusive TV shows and movies, introduce new product features and improve the overall Netflix experience," the company said in a statement Thursday. Subscriber growth in the U.S. has slowed, while overseas Netflix has rapidly expanded into new markets. Its global user base now stands at 104 million.

[Investors have been bullish](#) on Netflix, betting it has room to raise prices without alienating the company's user base. Netflix shares rose 5.4% Thursday to a record \$194.39 each. On social media, user feedback to the price increase was mixed, with some self-identified subscribers vowing to cancel the service while others saying it would still be much less costly than traditional cable-television offerings.

The last price increase Netflix announced was in the fall of 2015, when the standard plan also went up by \$1 a month. That increase also temporarily grandfathered in current subscribers and was rolled out to the user base over time. The company acknowledged that press coverage of the price increase on existing customers led to higher service cancellations in the spring of 2016. Netflix, which started in 1997 as a movie-by-mail rental service, went on to become a streaming juggernaut by initially licensing existing movies and shows from other producers. It has shifted toward creating exclusive, original content with an eye on keeping customers hooked on its service and avoiding a reliance on other content suppliers in Hollywood.

[sprinting around Pa., Josh Shapiro seeks to make a name as AG](#)

[pennlive.com Pa. court asked to delay gerrymandering case as U.S. Supreme Court hears similar issue](#)

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between about \$50 million and \$100 million, was relatively small for Netflix, but it reflects the company's desire to own content and hold intellectual-property rights. – *Wall Street Journal*

YouTube this week surfaced videos peddling misinformation, hateful messages and conspiracy theories to users tracking major news events—prompting the site to change its search results to promote more authoritative sources.

For example, the fifth result when searching “Las Vegas shooting” on YouTube late Tuesday yielded a video titled “Proof Las Vegas Shooting Was a FALSE FLAG attack—Shooter on 4th Floor.” The video said there were multiple shooters in Sunday’s mass shooting, a claim dismissed by law enforcement. Posted by a channel called the End Times News Report, it amassed more than 1.1 million views in about 27 hours.

The fourth result when searching “NFL anthem protest” on Wednesday was a video that claimed Anheuser-Busch InBev was considering pulling its sponsorship of the National Football League over national anthem protests—and urged viewers to push the company to do so. The claim had been widely debunked days before.

In response to criticism on social media of some search results this week, a person familiar with YouTube said the company is accelerating the rollout of planned changes to its search engine. On Wednesday night, the video service began promoting more authoritative sources in search results, especially pertaining to major news events, the person said. YouTube doesn’t disclose how it determines which sources are authoritative.

YouTube, a unit of Alphabet Inc.’s Google, has long been full of fringe content. But as the world’s largest video site and a growing rival to television, with more than 1.5 billion monthly users, YouTube’s feeding of such spurious content shows how the site can contribute to the spread of

Beyond Netflix’s main subscription streaming competitors, Amazon and Hulu, there are a sea of other streaming-media services, from TV network-focused ones like CBS’s “All Access,” to web-TV bundles like Dish Network’s Sling TV and YouTube TV, to [a forthcoming Disney-branded service](#) that will carry the entertainment giant’s movie releases starting in 2019. All are competing for viewers’ time and money. Netflix has been relentless in pursuing content deals and paying top dollar if necessary. In August, the company [recruited television producer](#) Shonda Rhimes, adding to a stable of creators for the platform that includes the likes of David Letterman, the Coen brothers and Adam Sandler.

The company also recently made its first acquisition, [buying comic-book publisher Millarworld](#). The deal,

misinformation. Google also [faced criticism this week](#) after the “top news” section of its search results misidentified the Las Vegas shooter by featuring a thread from a fringe message board.

Many large brands pulled spending on YouTube earlier this year after news reports revealed [their ads were running before hateful and extremist videos](#). As a result, the site removed many videos and pull ads from others. There didn’t appear to be ads on the fringe news videos this week. Controversial content has been on the site for years, and is highly ranked in search results. The second result for a search for “9/11” on Wednesday was a nearly 10-year-old video that presents conspiracy theories about the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks; it has been viewed 42.5 million times. The high search ranking of the End Times News Report video claiming there was a second shooter in Las Vegas helped it gain 371,000 views over four hours late Tuesday. On Wednesday, YouTube removed the video.

Jake Morphonios, who runs the End Times News Report along with a damaged-inventory-liquidation business in Kernersville, N.C., said the video eventually reached 2.5 million views. “It was a hot topic, of course, and was going to get some views anyway, but it really did get caught in [YouTube’s] algorithm and went viral from there,” he said. “Clearly it got into featured videos or something.” The 43-year-old said he has posted about 800 videos and typically gets about 5,000 views each.

Mr. Morphonios said YouTube gave his account its first penalty strike for the video. YouTube terminates accounts that get three strikes within three months. He said he aims to offer viewers information on news events that mainstream news sources won’t. “It’s my opinion, it’s my analysis, and everyone’s got an opinion, and I can understand that maybe they don’t want me to be considered the equivalent of The Wall Street Journal or the New York Times or something like that,” he said. “But still, I’m not presenting myself as mainstream media. I’m just a guy with a computer offering an opinion. And to be punished for that is, well, it’s draconian.”

YouTube said it has previously made changes to try to promote authoritative sources for breaking-news events by featuring their videos on its home page and by giving them top spots in search results and labeling them “Top News.” The company added that its site is designed to present diverse perspectives. “When it comes to news, we have thousands of news publishers that present a variety of viewpoints,” the company said in an email.

YouTube employs algorithms that determine how clips are ranked in search results and which videos to serve up to users in its prominent “Up next” column adjacent to its video player. The algorithms take into account factors such as a user’s history and a video’s popularity, but YouTube doesn’t reveal exactly how it works. The company has said it designed the algorithms to get users to watch more YouTube videos—a key factor in [a surge in YouTube viewership](#) in recent years. People now watch more than 1 billion hours of YouTube videos a day.

When a user watches a dubious video, YouTube typically suggests similar videos, a practice that can confirm users’ existing biases. But The Wall Street Journal found cases this week in which YouTube suggested conspiracy-theory and highly politicized videos next to videos from mainstream news sources, suggesting the site was also pushing fringe content to users who haven’t shown an interest in it. For instance, alongside a CBS News video of an interview with the brother of Las Vegas shooter Stephen Paddock, YouTube recommended a video titled “Stephen Paddock Las Vegas Gunman Was Set Up By The Illuminati CIA Occult?” Similarly, next to a Fox News video about mothers criticizing the NFL anthem protests, YouTube suggested a video titled “SHOCKING Discovery! Brother of Shooter Don’t Add Up INSIDE JOB.”

The Journal conducted all of its searches on YouTube in private browsers with tracking turned off to prevent previous history from influencing the search results or recommendations. The person familiar with YouTube said the company recognizes there are problems with its “Up next” algorithm and it is examining changes to promote more authoritative results. YouTube has been working on the changes to its search results for months but decided to implement them ahead of schedule, although they still need work, this person said. Searches for “Las Vegas shooting” late Wednesday returned nearly all mainstream news sources, but searches for “NFL anthem protest” and “9/11” still yielded misleading videos. — *Wall Street Journal*



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