



After 100 million piracy notices, it's time for Google to take meaningful action to help curb online copyright infringement

By Frances Moore, CEO, IFPI

13th January 2014

This week marks a key milestone for the global recording industry in our efforts to develop a thriving licensed digital music business – we have sent our 100 millionth piracy notice to Google.

In the last two and a half years, we have informed the world's leading search engine more than 100 million times that it is supplying links to sites providing copyright infringing music that pay nothing to artists, songwriters or record producers.

And this represents only a fraction of the infringing links supplied by Google, because the search engine caps the amount of piracy notices that rights holders can send.

Google, with its market capitalisation of more than US\$370 billion, is directing internet users to illegal sources of music. This is not only harming a recording industry whose revenues have fallen by 40 per cent in the last decade to US\$16.5 billion, but it is also harming the more than 500 licensed digital music services worldwide that offer up to 30 million tracks to internet users. How can these legitimate businesses reach their full potential when the world's largest search engine doesn't place them above pirate services in its search results?

Google has given public commitments that it wants to play its role in tackling copyright infringement online. In August 2012, it said it would take into account the number of valid copyright removal notices it receives for any given site leading them to be potentially placed lower in search results.

Unfortunately, the recording industry has seen no demonstrable demotion of sites that receive a high volume of piracy notices. If you search for an artist's name and the term "mp3" on Google, the first page of results you get is still dominated by links to infringing sites.

The truth is that, whatever Google's claims to be helping tackle infringement, they are not showing convincing results. Research indicates that search engines are a major gateway to illegal music. The *Digital Entertainment Survey 2013*, from law firm Wiggins, noted that 65 per cent of internet users accessing infringing content regularly use search engines to locate it.

We would like to see Google and other search engines play a more responsible role in encouraging safe and legal use of the internet. Our research suggests consumers share this view - 60 per cent of internet users worldwide believing that search engines should

prioritise licensed music services over pirate sites in their search results according to Ipsos MediaCT.

IFPI and its affiliated organisations, including RIAA in the US and BPI in the UK, are calling on search engines to take meaningful action to address online copyright infringement. The recording industry has five requests:

- Fulfill the admirable promise to demote sites receiving extensive numbers of piracy notices.
- Make sure that the “take down” of a song is effective and does not mean temporary removal, to be replaced 2 seconds later.
- Better help consumers to find legitimate sources of music – for example by using an icon to indicate authorised sites
- Change the way the auto-complete search function works so that it no longer directs users to pirate sites
- Make sure your stated policy on repeat offenders has teeth – why is it that, after millions of copyright notices to the same site, this is not having an impact on search results?

Google has a role to play in helping to make the internet a safer place for legal commerce. Indeed, it has launched its own music streaming service, licensed by record companies, which has attracted many plaudits. It has taken some steps to improve its reaction to anti-piracy notices from rights holders.

But it has the technological expertise to do more and it has a duty to its users to stop overwhelming them with links to infringing content when they search for music online.

The recording industry worldwide invests US\$4.5 billion a year in nurturing, discovering and promoting artists. This ensures a continuous supply of new content that keeps people engaged with digital services and using the latest consumer electronics.

To enable it to continue to do that, leading technology players such as Google need to show a greater respect for copyright law. If they can take that step, then together we can build a sustainable digital marketplace that will continue to provide great music and a fantastic user experience for consumers around the world.