

On the morning of September 4, 2009, Google China announced the resignation of CEO, Li Kaifu. This news shocked many Google employees as well as the public. Why did he suddenly resign after four years as the CEO? The Chinese government controlled media reported that Li decided to set up his own business, but is there another reason? Perhaps we can find some clues from the series of items below.

His new book reveals grievances

In his autobiography entitled *The World is Different Because of You*, Li Kaifu mentions in the foreword, “when I walked casually into cafes and saw young people using the Google toolbar to search for information, using Google Maps to check directions, choosing a “skin” (custom look and feel for a user interface) of their choice, or listening to music with Google music, I would smile from the inside of my heart. So much so it even made me forget the injustice and grievances that I had suffered. It also helped me forget the challenges and bitter experiences I had in the dangerous and treacherous world of the internet.”

Were the injustice and grievances as well as the challenges and bitter experiences in the dangerous and treacherous world of the internet the actual reasons he resigned?

Recently Google China has been heavily criticized

In the past there had been rumors that whenever there was an important political or news event, the authorities would find fault with Google for “inappropriate content” which the authorities had found online by using Google. This frequently resulted in Google being taken offline or put behind a firewall.

In January 2009, specific departments in China started a special campaign to perform a “nationwide cleanup of vulgarism on the internet”. So called “vulgar sites” were ranked on department-run websites. Google was ranked first on the list.

Not long ago Li and his team were shocked to learn that Google China was being portrayed as spreading unhealthy information on a program on China Central TV (CCTV). It was on June 18, 2009 that the CCTV “special report” criticized Google China’s office for spreading “massive amounts of sexual content and unhealthy information”. At the same time Li Kaifu was asked to have a talk with some personnel from China’s internet monitoring department.

This was one of the biggest blows to Google China. Li said frankly, “before June 18, we were able to perform much better.” This seems to reveal that after the defamation regarding Google aired on CCTV, Li Kaifu and Google were undergoing increased pressure and restrictions

unknown to the public at large.

Why did Li Kaifu really resign? Google's public relations department has not yet replied. In a letter to his team, Li encourages Google employees to "have the courage to follow your heart and your intuition." Perhaps Li himself has gathered the courage to follow his own heart and his own intuition and is no longer willing to succumb to regime coercion.