

The Biggest Business Fails of 2024

What do a global IT outage, glue on pizza, and the decline of an aviation giant have in common?

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Illustration: Inc.; Photo: Courtesy Mattel, Getty Images

There are many ways for a company to make a mistake— and many other ways to compound that mistake by handling the aftermath poorly.

Each year in business is as much defined by failure as it is success, and 2024 was pretty rife with examples of companies committing some spectacular blunders. There was a Google’s AI search function telling users to eat glue (more on that later), or toys whose packaging accidentally contained a link to a porn website (more to see here, too).

For companies who fumble the football with a wide-open lane to the end zone, there’s usually the possibility of redemption beyond whatever condemnation or schadenfreude may follow the mistake. But not always.

For now, we’ll remember their foibles. Here are some of the biggest business fails of 2024.

Jaguar's disastrous EV teaser

What is this exactly? Ostensibly, it's a teaser for a new electric car manufactured by the oh-so-British luxury automaker Jaguar Land Rover— now owned by India's Tata Motors. But it looks more like a haute couture fashion shoot on the lunar surface drenched in LSD.

The confusion stems from the fact that the 30-second ad, which debuted on November 19, doesn't show any cars. It does offer plenty of slogans that epitomize the once-staid automaker's leap into modernity (or techno-futurist high-fashion). But declaring that Jaguar will “live vivid,” “copy nothing,” and “delete ordinary” outraged conservative pundits who whined about the commercial's purportedly [woke overtones](#). Jaguar Land Rover found itself ensnared in the culture wars, through no fault of its own. The company's managing director Rawdon Glover told [the Financial Times](#) that the commercial was followed by a “a blaze of intolerance.”

Eventually, the automaker released more information about its forthcoming EV, the Jaguar Type 00, which is currently a prototype. It looks like a [pink Batmobile](#). [Many people are saying this.](#)

Google recommends glue for dinner

Like the rest of Big Tech, Google has been in a mad dash to lead the AI revolution. The search giant unveiled AI Overviews in May, which provides AI-generated summaries to search queries. One of those search queries yielded results that unleashed a culinary nightmare: It recommended to users that they put glue on pizza.

The result was generated by users who asked Google what to do about the problem of cheese falling off pizza. Apparently, as [The Verge reported](#), the horrible advice was sourced from a [12-year-old Reddit thread, which was a joke](#). The early days of AI Overviews produced other problematic results, like advice on how many rocks to [eat for nutritional purposes](#), minerals being part of a healthy diet, of course. This also came from Reddit.

The AI blunder caused a furor online and Google issued numerous statements to media outlets reporting on the botched rollout. In June, [Google reportedly scaled](#) back its AI search results by providing fewer of them. Querying “[cheese slides off pizza](#)” doesn't generate AI solutions anymore.

Anything Boeing related

Boeing was once a symbol of U.S. industrial might and aerospace engineering, and a global leader in commercial airliners. The company's reputation has been marred for years by a

string of crises, starting with crashes of two 737 Max jets in 2018 and 2019 and a subsequent global grounding of that aircraft.

This year Boeing lost even more altitude. In January, the rear door of a Boeing Max 9 detached mid-flight and screamed toward earth, landing in the backyard of a Portland, Oregon science teacher. Max 9 jets were [grounded by the Federal Aviation Administration](#) and production was halted.

Problems snowballed from there: The FAA ordered Boeing to devise a corrective plan and conducted an audit of the Seattle-based manufacturer. A litany of government agencies have investigated Boeing this year, including the FBI, Department of Justice and the National Transportation Safety Board—all related to the many accidents and allegations of negligence during the production process made by various whistleblowers. More than [30,000 Boeing factory workers](#) who belong to the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace also went on strike for two months, starting in September.

The company [tapped Kelly Ortberg](#), an aviation industry veteran with a background in engineering, as CEO in August to lead it through its most chaotic era.

Mattel's porn slip-up

Mattel launched a commemorative toy to coincide with the release of *Wicked*, the film adaptation of the highly-popular Broadway play. On the doll's packaging, the toymaker [accidentally put a link to the website](#) of a porn company instead of the movie's site, Wickedmovie.com.

It was a mistake of omission, and a very bad one.

“Mattel was made aware of a misprint on the packaging of the Mattel Wicked collection dolls, primarily sold in the US, which intended to direct consumers to the official WickedMovie.com landing page,” the company said in a statement last month. The dolls were pulled from the shelves of big box retailers such as Target and Kohls, and Amazon sales were also halted.

Cue the lawyers: a South Carolina mother sued Mattel in December, filing a proposed class action in Los Angeles federal court that seeks \$5 million in damages. Holly Ricketson's four-year-old daughter navigated to the adult website, Ricketson claims.

The debacle underscores how important it is for companies to check links to see where they navigate, especially before putting them on children's toys.

CrowdStrike's global outage

The cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike can now lay claim to the most catastrophic software glitch in history, which surely isn't a milestone it would like to celebrate. In July, the company pushed a software update to its subscribers, which affected roughly 8.5 million devices running on Windows operating systems. The update was buggy, and sent out "despite containing problematic content data," a CrowdStrike [report later determined](#).

CrowdStrike serves Fortune 500 companies and small businesses, and the faulty update crashed the computer systems of all subscribers who use Windows, no matter their size. Delta Air Lines had its systems scrambled and had to cancel thousands of flights. Across various industries, billions of dollars were lost as the "blue screen of death" spread across computer terminals. Healthcare and banking lost \$1.94 billion and \$1.15 billion, respectively, as a result of the snafu, [CNN reported](#).

Normal service was eventually restored, but various independent analyses of the glitch concluded that the company [wasn't testing for bugs sufficiently](#).