This week’s dead Google products: Google Podcasts, basic Gmail, and more!

Enlarge / Google is looking pretty dilapidated these days.
Aurich Lawson

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Google kills product

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Google is killing off so many products lately we need to do a roundup or we won’t get anything else done today. First on the docket is the inevitable death of Google Podcasts. We’ve been side-eying Google Podcasts ever since Google’s *new* podcast platform, YouTube Podcasts, launched in April. YouTube has been slowly consuming all of Google’s media properties, and podcasts completes the trinity along with videos (both amateur and scripted Hollywood content) and music.

Google does not need two podcast apps, so Google Podcasts must die. This was announced *on* the official YouTube blog, if there was any question about the responsible party. Google Podcasts is getting shut down “later in 2024,” but before that, we’ll see an expansion of YouTube podcasts, which is currently only available in the US. YouTube says its podcast platform (which is built into the YouTube Music app) will be out “globally” before the end of the year.

Enlarge / The Google Podcasts app.

Google Podcasts was Google's third podcasting service, after the Google Reader-powered Google Listen (2009–2012) and Google Play Music Podcasts (2016–2020). Google Podcasts technically started in 2016 as a bizarre podcast player that was only accessible via a mobile Google Search. Searching for a podcast in the Google app would show a play button next to episode search results, but there was no way to subscribe to a podcast. Android Google Podcasts finally got podcast-defining subscription support a whopping two years later, but you couldn't really call the service viable until an iOS app finally launched in 2020.

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In 2024, Google Podcasts will die at 8 years old, if you want to count from the weird Google Search beginnings, but only has

had the bare minimum feature set of a podcast service for four years. With a startup procedure like that, it’s no wonder that Google Podcasts isn’t very popular, with YouTube saying, “According to Edison, about 23% of weekly podcast users in the US say YouTube is their most frequently used service, versus just 4% for Google Podcasts.”

YouTube Premium Lite heads into the darkness

Staying with Team YouTube, the next door Google’s Grim Reaper is knocking on belongs to YouTube Premium Lite. While YouTube Premium gives you access to ad-free YouTube and YouTube Music, the “Lite” version was a Europe-only budget plan that cut down the feature set to only ad-free YouTube videos. The cost was 6.99 euros/month, a decent discount over the then-11.99 euros per month price. If you’ve never heard of this, that’s because it got a very small rollout to only Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

You can throw this shutdown into the pile of “Google price increases” this year. Regular YouTube Premium jumped in price to $13.99 in July, and shutting down the lower tier is a way to raise the price for everyone else. Current YouTube Premium Lite subscribers all got emails saying their current subscriptions will end on October 25, 2023, and if they want to keep seeing ad-free YouTube, it’s time to pay full price.

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