

Microsoft Top Lawyer's Twitter Feed: A Very Deep Dive

January 27, 2017

Has anyone else noticed something different about Microsoft's chief legal officer lately?

The guy's been tweeting up a storm.

A tweeter since April 2008, **Brad Smith** (<https://twitter.com/BradSmi>) has 14.4K followers.

Recently, I decided to review Smith's Twitter feed, taking note of the issues close to his heart, who he is following (some may surprise you), and his most shared posts over the past two months.

I looked back as far as Dec. 1 — because it seemed like 57 days would be a good sample size — and wrote notes on everything Smith posted.

I'm not usually this much of a creeper, I swear. And Microsoft, you don't have to file a restraining order. It's just that Smith is a bit of a celebrity in the world of law and technology. And now in a world where even the White House is using Twitter as a platform to control their messaging, is it so surprising that a top lawyer of one of the largest corporations would do the same?

Microsoft, with \$85.32 billion in revenue, is one of the largest providers of legal work to outside law firms.

According to **Bloomberg Law** (<https://www.bna.com/bloomberglaw/>)'s Litigation Analytics, its top law firms over the past five years in federal courts include Perkins Coie LLP, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, Sidley Austin LLP, Fish & Richardson PC and Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP. The company has also been at the center of the debate about government access to private customer data. Earlier this week, an appeals court let stand a previous ruling that a federal court overstepped its bounds when demanding that Microsoft turn over a customer's emails stored in Ireland.

With that, let's turn to the Twitter data.

Since Dec. 1, Smith (or his public relations apparatus) has posted 51 tweets and directly interacted with — or, replied to — two people.

One person was Robert Grey, the president of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity who wished Smith well on Jan. 2 after Smith's tenure as chair of the LCLD board of directors came to an end. [The **LCLD** (<http://www.lclldnet.org/about/>) is a group of chief legal officers and law firm managing partners who promote diversity in the legal profession.]



(https://bol.bna.com/wp-



content/uploads/2017/01/Robertgraytweet.png)

Another was Hadi Partovi, the tech entrepreneur and founder of Code.org, a non-profit dedicated to expanding access to computer science and increasing participation by women and minorities.



(https://bol.bna.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Hadi-partovi.png)

What might be more interesting, though, is to drill down into his original tweets. His most popular tweet, with 225 retweets and 327 likes, was an article by The Atlantic, titled, "Why Some Companies Are Trying to Hire More People on the Autism Spectrum."



(<https://bol.bna.com/wp->

content/uploads/2017/01/twitterbradsmith.png)

Smith, of course, has been outspoken in the legal industry about the importance of diversity and inclusion. One initiative he's taken on has been overseeing a program over the past decade that incentivizes law firms to employ diverse lawyers by awarding them with bonuses after they surpass diversity staffing goals. So a number of his tweets related to D&I as it pertains to the technology industry.



(<https://bol.bna.com/wp->

content/uploads/2017/01/twitter-brad-smith.png)

Another common theme that came through in Smith's Twitter feed was his desire to bring about change in the world through technology.



Brad Smith @BradSmi · 12 Dec 2016

What an amazing use of [#tech](#) to help deliver resources and aid to those in the world who could use it most.



To Help The Poorest Of The Poor, First You Have To Find Them

A new project uses computers to analyze daytime satellite pictures for signs of extreme poverty. Does it work?

npr.org



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([https://bol.bna.com/wp-](https://bol.bna.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/microsoft-brad-smith.png)

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Smith also retweeted others 26 times over the eight and a half week period.

Not surprisingly, they were mostly Microsoft executives and employees, with a few recurring names appearing: Satya Nadella, CEO, Harry Shum, executive vice president of Artificial Intelligence, and Jenny Lay-Flurrie, chief accessibility officer.

In terms of cadence, Smith tweets and/or retweets just about every working day, between one to a handful of times. He did take some time off for the holidays, though, going off-line from Dec. 22 to Jan. 2.

Yes, lots of people follow Brad Smith. But who does Smith follow? As of the time we published this post, **he followed** (<https://twitter.com/BradSmi/following>) 469 people or organizations.

These included President Donald Trump, his daughter Ivanka Trump, Trump's counselor Kellyanne Conway, as well as some from the other side of the aisle such as Barack Obama, Samantha Power and Valerie Jarrett.

In his line-up of journalists, a number of technology reporters made the cut: shout-out to Bloomberg reporter Dina Bass of Bloomberg News, and Shira Ovie, of Bloomberg Gadfly. There was also Michael Oreskes, Head of News at NPR, and Greta Van Susteren, now of MSNBC.

Other notable mentions: Laurene Powell, the widow of Steve Jobs who is the founder of Emerson Collective, which advocates for policies around education, immigration reform, social justice and environmental conservation; Paul Ryan, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and John Lewis, the civil rights icon and the U.S. Representative for Georgia's 5th congressional district.

The dude also appears to be a hardcore Packers fan, with follows to Aaron Rodgers, Lambaugh Field and a number of different Packers related Twitter feeds.

As far as lawyers who made The Smith 469, Orin Kerr, the GW University Law School, Harvard Law professors Lawrence Lessig and Jonathan Zittrain, and Cameron Kerry, John Kerry's brother who is senior counsel at Sidley Austin.

It's worth noting that Smith's Twitter presence is somewhat rare in the world of general counsels. Some high-level general counsels have Twitter profiles, such as Craig Silliman of Verizon, and Colin Stretch of Facebook, but they aren't particularly active. Others, like Alex Dimitrief of General Electric and Karen Roberts of Wal-Mart Stores, don't even appear to have accounts.

Why does Smith do it? Well, we'll have to wait until next time to hear. A request for comment with the president of Microsoft is pending.

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