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INTRODUCING THE BRANDFOG TRUE INFLUENCE SCORE AND QUADRANT

Measuring the true influence of technology CEOs on social media

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Introduction

In an era of intense digital disruption and increasing mistrust of traditional channels of communication, smart C-Suite executives are leveraging social media to communicate and build trust with customers, employees and stakeholders.

Many are using digital platforms to go above and beyond sharing just company news, to build thought leadership and establish themselves and their companies as sources of industry insights and forward-looking trends. However, even though more leaders are leveraging social media, the tools for evaluating the effectiveness of that engagement have not kept up with the times. This paper describes a simple, rigorous way to measure social media prominence using the methods of **social network analysis.** Social network analysis is a broad field employing mathematical methods to analyze social interaction among the people in a community. Further, this paper demonstrates how to use the same methods to develop strategies to improve influence in a community.

Who Should Read This Paper

C-suite executives and communications leaders who wish to use social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn as a leadership tool to have an impact on the conversations occurring among the thought leaders in their industry.

Defining The Problem

Businesspeople use social media for a variety of purposes, but executives and thought leaders have specific uses that go beyond the standard corporate marketing and communications processes. Executives use social media to:

- Enhance the company's reputation, as well as their own.

- Build strong and trusting relationships with brand stakeholders.

- Propose innovative ideas of value industry-wide.

- Promote other innovators' ideas.

Social media engagement demands an investment of time and energy. Executives need to know how well their efforts are paying off in meeting the above objectives. **Specifically, they need to know:**

- Am I receiving all the latest, most relevant ideas generated in areas of interest?

- Are my own ideas being effectively transmitted to relevant people?

- Am I building a strong and relevant audience network to support my business?

From these fundamentals, many other benefits may accrue, such as the creation of serendipitous offline connections with potential new business partners, increased opportunities for speaking and publishing, and more broadly, an increased ability to shape the conversation in one's industry. But to do this, executives need to know that they are tuned in to the right audience. The first and most crucial step toward answering the above questions is to define one's community. Without a well-defined community, metrics alone are meaningless. An executive may have thousands of followers on Twitter, but if the objective is to enhance one's prominence within a community of industry thought leaders, then all those connections to family, old classmates, bots, and a random assortment of miscellaneous followers are not going to provide any business or professional value.

How we define our community and determine which individuals belong to it depends on the objectives of our social media engagement. Are we trying to enhance our relationship with peer executives? Analysts? Investors? Media? One individual may of course operate simultaneously in several communities, with different objectives, and the methods discussed in this paper can be applied independently to each community, yielding precise results for each.

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The BRANDfog True Influence (BTI) Score

The methods described in this paper are used by BRANDfog, the leading social media and digital reputation consulting firm for CEOs.

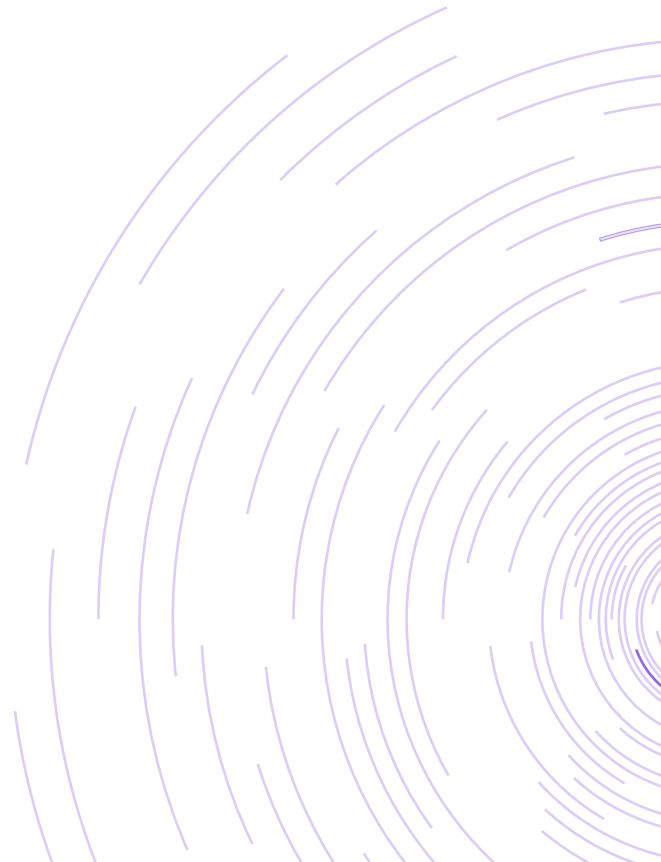Our mission is to create better business leaders through social engagement, communications and transparency. **We use the True Influence Score to:**

- Assess clients' prominence in relevant online communities,

- Develop strategies to grow clients' influence, both online and offline.

Our approach to measuring social influence is to custom-define a client's relevant community, model it as a follower network, and then use social network analysis methods to understand the structure of the network and assess a client's prominence within the network.

The work of creating and maintaining the member list for any community is not insignificant. BRANDfog maintains up-to-date lists of C-Suite and other executives on Twitter. The data we used for this white paper spans the second half of 2018 to the first quarter of 2019.

Our focus on a well-defined community allows for a more detailed, precise evaluation than one might obtain from a generalized social influence score. This precision, in turn, enables us to do what-if analyses in order to devise custom strategies for improving a client's prominence in the relevant community. By offering a transparent methodology for the BRANDfog BTI Score, we hope to encourage more open and precise conversations about social media influence.

Methodology

The BRANDfog BTI Score measures an individual's influence on social media within a specific, relevant community. This paper focuses on the online influence of the top 20 U.S. technology CEOs based on rank in the Fortune 1000 who are on Twitter.

The Community: to define the relevant community of influence for these CEOs, we identified over 250 technology journalists at major publications and technology analysts at major research firms who engage on Twitter professionally. We used social network analysis methods to measure the network centrality of each technology CEO within that community of press and analysts. The measures of network centrality we use include **degree centrality, betweenness centrality and eigenvector centrality.**

We further analyzed each executive's use of LinkedIn as a leadership tool, using a scoring system based on three factors: presence on the LinkedIn platform, number of followers, and use of LinkedIn's publishing platform. Each of these elements contributed to a single numerical score for each executive, creating the BRANDfog BTI Score.

To build our BTI Quadrant, we divided our metrics into two groups. The first group of metrics demonstrates the strength of a CEO's audience (thought leader influence) and includes the volume and relative influence of the CEO's Twitter followers. Total score for this first group of metrics determined the horizontal position in the quadrant.

The second group of metrics demonstrates the strength of a CEO's ability to network (networking influence) and includes the CEO's shortest-path centrality on Twitter, as well as their effectiveness on LinkedIn. Total score for this second group of metrics determined the vertical position in the quadrant. The combined data is then used to plot each CEO's position on the BTI Quadrant.
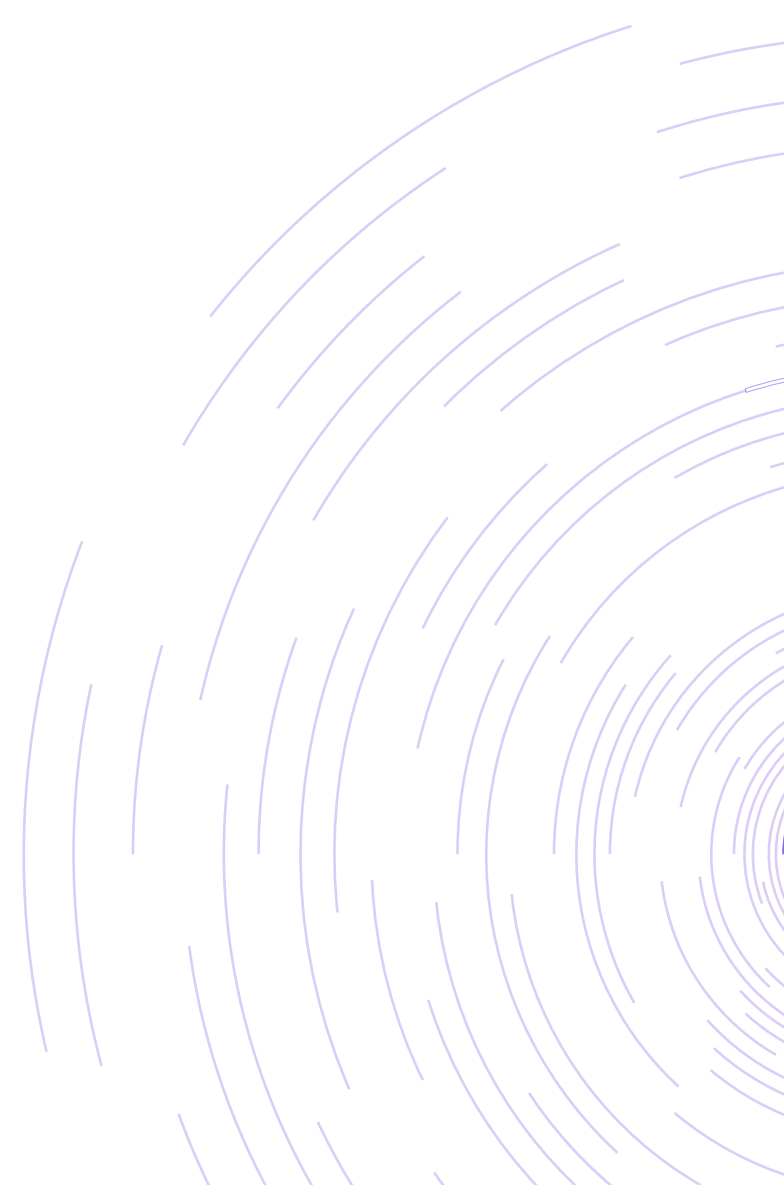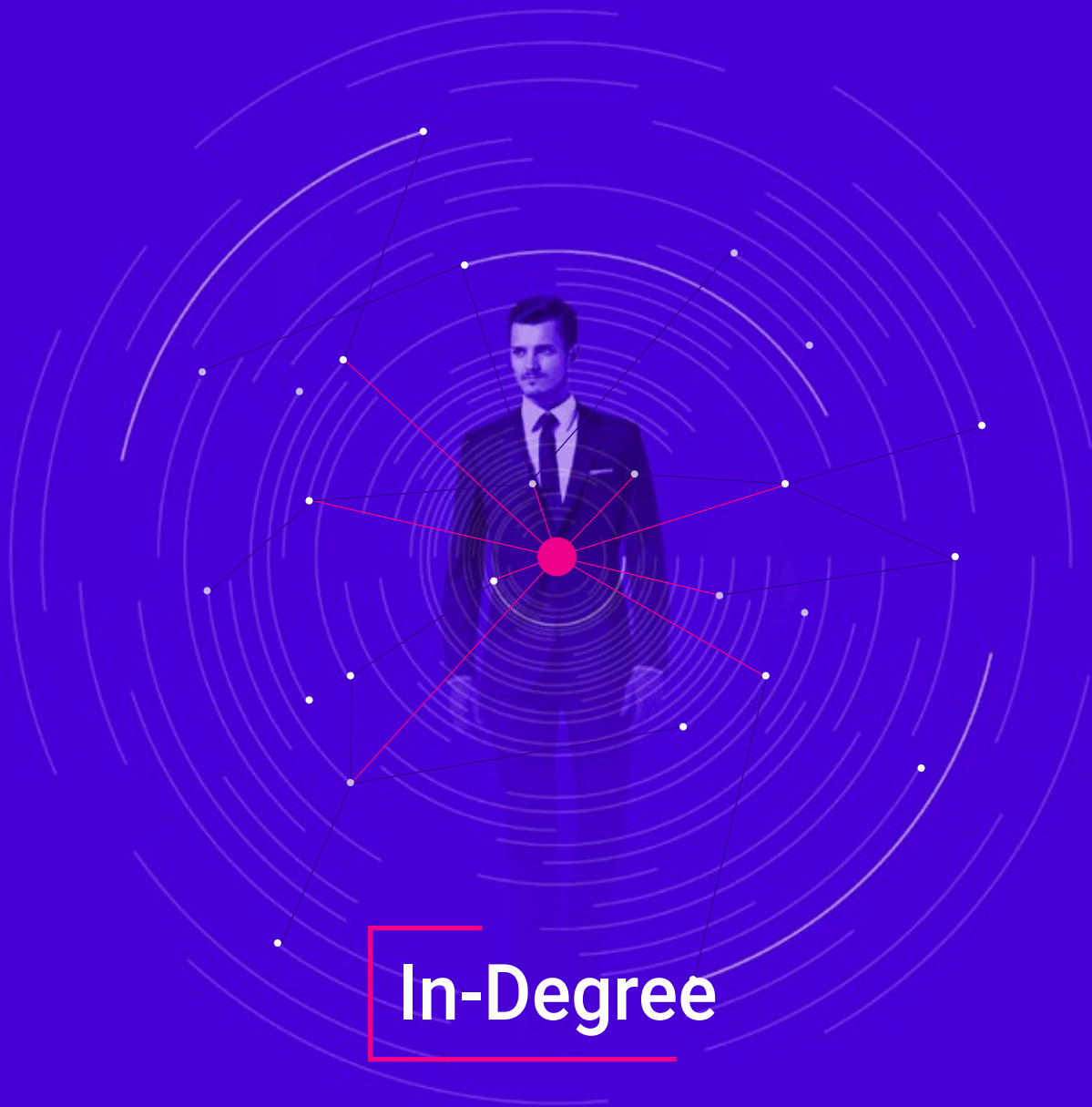
Network Centrality and Real-World Influence

The BRANDfog BTI Score measures an individual's influence on social media within a specific, relevant community.

Social network analysis is a broad field employing mathematical methods to analyze social interaction among the people in a community. With the rapid evolution of online communities, along with the flood of meta-data available from social networks like Twitter and LinkedIn, these methods have become essential tools for understanding online activity. Common SNA methods of computing network centrality offer pretty good proxies for what we think of as influence or prominence in a community.

We've identified three distinct centrality measures capture different aspects of what we intuitively think of as influence: **in-degree, betweenness, and eigenvector centrality**. Each one measures a different aspect of influence within a community, and therefore is relevant to the BRANDfog BTI Score in a different way.

In-degree represents the number of people following a person. A person with high in-degree has many followers, and is influential because their tweets go directly to many people.

In-Degree

Betweenness measures how many shortest paths go through each node. In real-world terms, a person with high betweenness on Twitter is influential because tweets from one sub-community must be re-tweeted by that person to spread to many other sub-communities. Such a person is a connector, sharing ideas across different sections of the community.

Betweenness

A person with high **eigenvector centrality** has influence in proportion to the influence of their connections in the community. So, a person with few followers may still be influential if those followers are very influential themselves.

Eigenvector

The BRANDfog BTI Quadrant

CONNECTORS

INFLUENCERS

50
45 • Michael Dell
40 • Mark Benioff
35 • Satya Nadella
Antonio Neri • • Chuck Robbins
Mark Hurd, Devin Wenig
30
25
Mark Okerstrom
Dion Weisler • • • • Reed Hastings
Bobby Kotick
Lisa Su
Sasan Goodarzi
Sanjay Mehrota
20
15
Steve Mollenkpf
10 • •
George Kurian
5

ENGAGERS

BROADCASTERS

Greg Brown
0 • Ginni Rometty   Jeff Bezos •   Tim Cook •

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35   40   45   50

Networking Influence

Thought Leader Influence

Defining the True Influence of Technology CEOs on Social Media

The BRANDfog BTI Quadrant measures the online influence of industry CEOs. This BTI Quadrant depicts the top 20 Fortune 1000 technology CEOs who are on Twitter, and maps their influence among industry press and industry analysts. This visual representation of how influential the CEOs are within key communities of interest provides robust, actionable insights.

It shows the ways in which these leaders have developed their influence. More, we can see some broad trends for social engagement among technology leaders. The first clear trend is that technology leaders are still in the early stages of leveraging social media for thought leadership. Only 18 of the 43 technology companies in the Fortune 500 have CEOs who have started engaging with social media. All of the executives discussed in this paper are already in the top half of their peers in terms of their social engagement. There is still competitive advantage to be gained by just showing up and engaging on social media.

However, as top business leaders move from experimentation to a more mature social strategy, a gap between the biggest social leaders and their peers has emerged. A small number of CEOs enjoy outsized influence that is more than just a function of their company's work or their personal charisma. They use social media in thoughtful ways to define the terms of the conversation in their industry. BRANDfog's work with Fortune 1000 C-Suite executives shows that this is fueled by a dynamic process that thoughtfully interweaves top-tier content, a strong executive voice, and real-time, responsive engagement with stakeholders. It's not enough to broadcast news about your company – to be truly influential, leaders must engage the right industry stakeholders with information that is relevant to them.

BTI Quadrant

Each of the four sections of the BRANDfog True Influence Quadrant represents a different stage of engagement on social media. The path for any executive from first engagement to becoming a true influencer may vary, but at any moment their social profile tends to fall into one of the patterns below.

Bottom left: Engagers

These leaders have taken the crucial step of joining the conversation on social media. They are building connections with industry stakeholders. Many have leveraged their social profile for strong internal communication with employees and shareholders, but they are just beginning to turn their focus toward shaping conversations externally within their industry. Engaged leaders' next steps to more strategic social media use should be twofold. First, these leaders can engage with relevant conversations in their industry and build relationships with the people shaping those conversations. Additionally, engaged leaders can build audiences by generating smart, industry-leading content and sharing across social channels.

CEOs:

Reed Hastings, Netflix
Bobby Kotick, Activision-Blizzard
Mark Okerstrom, Expedia
Dion Weisler, HP
Sanjay Mehrota, Micron Technologies
Lisa Su, AMD
Steve Mollenkopf, Qualcomm
George Kurian, NetApp
Ginni Rometty, IBM
Greg Brown, Motorola Solutions
Sasan Goodarzi, Intuit

Bottom right: Broadcasters

These leaders have a big platform, and lots of stakeholders listening to what they have to say. They can get their message out to some of the most important people who are writing and thinking about their industry, and they are well placed to clearly communicate their vision for their company and their industry. Broadcasters who aspire to leverage their voice for greater impact can reach out to other thought leaders on social platforms and engage in the conversations that are happening around them.

CEOs:

Tim Cook, Apple
Jeff Bezos, Amazon

Top left: Connectors

These leaders excel at making connections between people and ideas. They are in tune with the ideas defining and reshaping their markets and can find and connect with the relevant writers and thought leaders in their industry to further that conversation. Connectors can increase their impact by generating and sharing original content, clarifying their voice and focus, and using their network of connections to build thought leadership.

CEOs:

Michael Dell, Dell
Chuck Robbins, Cisco Systems
Devin Wenig, eBay
Mark Hurd, HP
Antonio Neri, Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Top right: Influencers

These leaders define the terms of the conversation in their industry. With a finger on the pulse of the industry and a large, influential audience at their disposal, Influencers can see trends coming and help to shape what form they take. Influencers are firing on all cylinders, taking the best advantage of the Twitter and LinkedIn platforms to effectively use social media as a leadership tool.

CEOs:

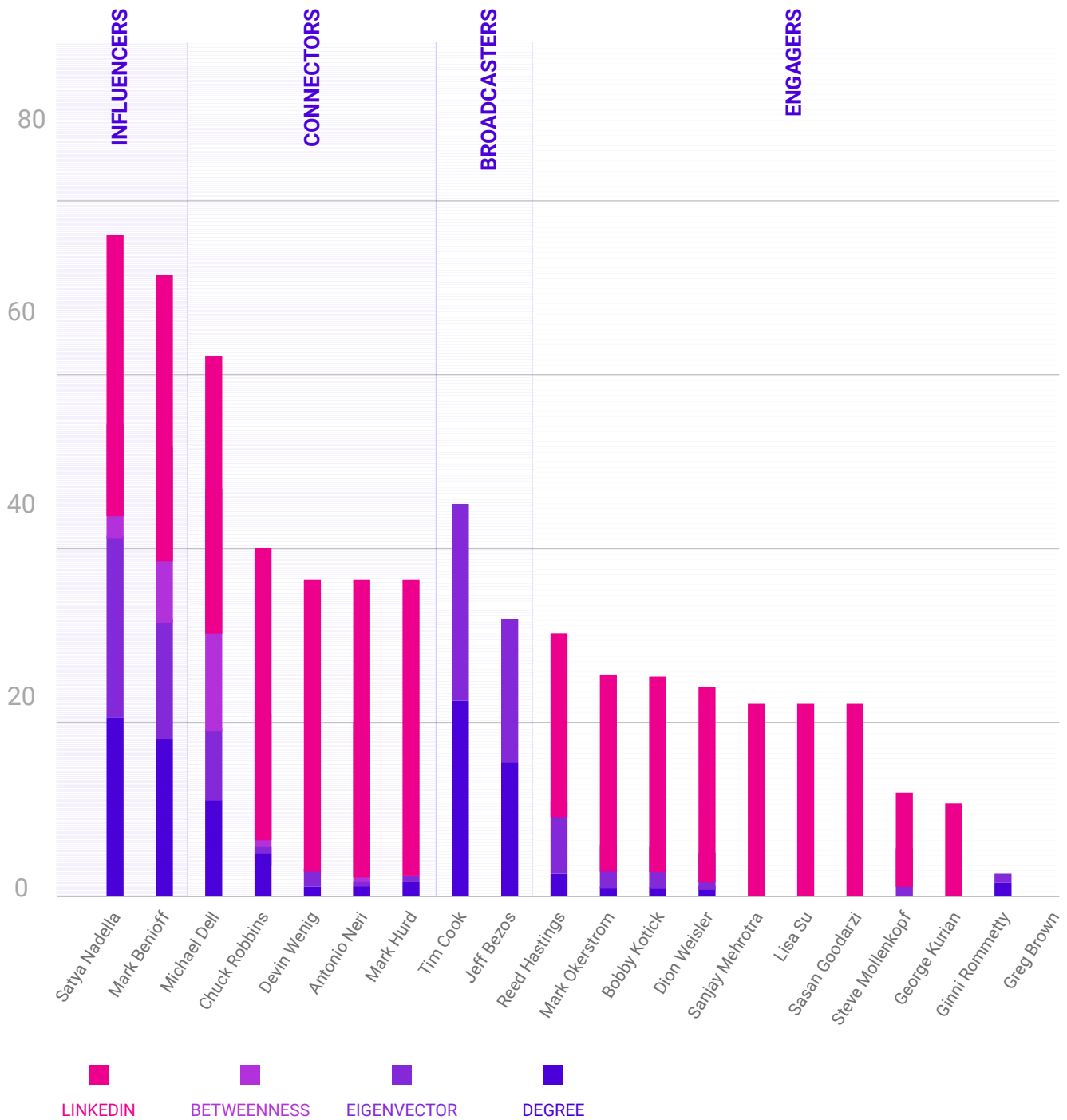Satya Nadella, Microsoft
Mark Benioff, Salesforce

BTI Scores for the Top 20 Technology CEOs on Social Media

The BRANDfog BTI Score can also serve as an overall barometer of social engagement within a community.

By breaking down the score into its four components, we can see where technology leaders are gaining the strongest social returns, and where the opportunities are greatest to increase engagement and build stronger digital thought leadership platforms. We see that for the majority of the leaders, LinkedIn engagement is a major part of their social presence and strategy. However, the executives who score well without LinkedIn are key drivers of technology news who share that news more consistently through Twitter. Social influence is driven by conversations, and only by tapping into relevant industry conversations can leaders truly shape the dialogue.

Targeted engagement with key press and analyst influencers can dramatically improve many executives' social influence.

The BRANDfog BTI Score,
Top 20 Technology CEOs

INFLUENCERS   CONNECTORS   BROADCASTERS   ENGAGERS

80

60

40

20

0

Satya Nadella · Mark Benioff · Michael Dell · Chuck Robbins · Devin Wenig · Antonio Neri · Mark Hurd · Tim Cook · Jeff Bezos · Reed Hastings · Mark Okerstrom · Bobby Kotick · Dion Weisler · Sanjay Mehrotra · Lisa Su · Sasan Goodarzi · Steve Mollenkopf · George Kurian · Ginni Rommetty · Greg Brown

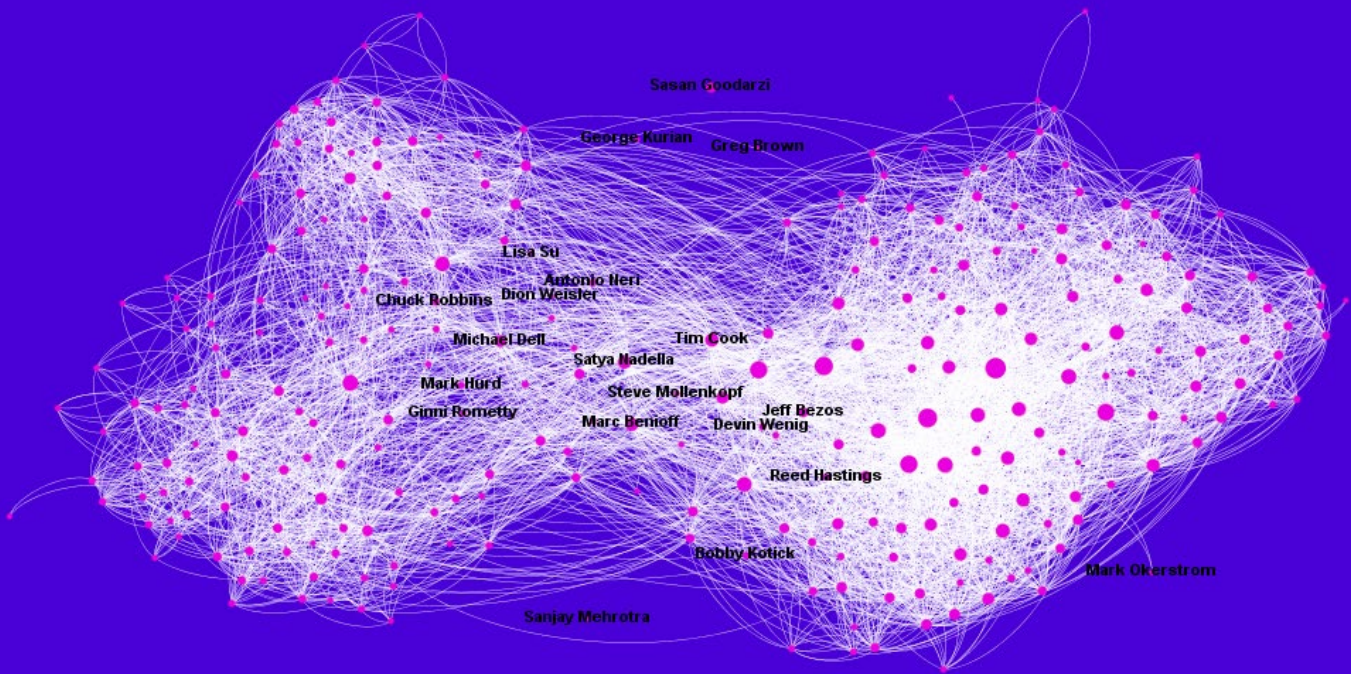LINKEDIN   BETWEENNESS   EIGENVECTOR   DEGREE

How connected are these top-tier executives? Here is a picture of the technology press and analyst community surrounding our top 20 U.S. technology CEOs. In this diagram, each dot, or node, represents a technology CEO, a technology journalist, or an analyst. The size of the circles represents the number of Twitter followers from within the community that the individual has. The lines between individuals show who is following whom.

For clarity, we have only labeled the CEOs in our community – un-labeled nodes represent press and analysts. Note again that we are dealing with only the mutual followers within this community of top technology CEOs and technology press and analysts. No connections outside the community are considered. The network diagram clusters more-connected individuals together, to show the groups within our overall community. We can see that our CEOs are not embedded in any one subgroup, but occupy the middle ground, connected to members of all the subgroups within our community. This shows that the CEOs of top technology companies are creating healthy, diverse audiences, which include press, analysts and one another. The two top performers, Influencers Satya Nadella and Mark Benioff, occupy almost the exact middle of the diagram, making them well-placed to influence a wide array of conversations in the technology sphere.

Ultimately, any C-suite executive can develop real-world influence by having great ideas and successfully promoting them within a target community. By modeling a social network to act as an online "community," executives can understand more of the dynamics of the group that they are interested in influencing. So armed, a leader can develop effective strategies to improve standing in the community, and thereby attain sufficient prominence to effectively generate, discover and promote the best of the community's ideas.

Analyzing the Community

Sasan Goodarzi

George Kurian   Greg Brown

Lisa Su

Antonio Neri
Chuck Robbins   Dion Weisler

Michael Dell   Tim Cook
          Satya Nadella

Mark Hurd   Steve Mollenkopf
Ginni Rometty
          Marc Benioff   Devin Wenig   Jeff Bezos

          Reed Hastings

        Bobby Kotick
                              Mark Okerstrom

Sanjay Mehrotra

Top 20 U.S. Technology CEOs,
Press and Analyst Community
Follower Network Diagram

Conclusion

Some C-Suite executives are leveraging social media more often and more strategically to develop real-world influence and foster industry dialogue, however measuring the success of those efforts is challenging.
Counting followers, retweets and likes is an insufficient method of measuring leadership and influence, and is limited in its ability to inform a forward-looking engagement strategy.

Just as an insurance company doesn't measure its market share against a manufacturer of consumer goods, neither should a CEO of a software company measure their social media influence against a movie star. 'Influence' is only meaningful if you have a well-defined audience. By determining the relevant community in advance and using transparent metrics, executives can effectively measure their level of industry influence and leverage social network analysis for actionable insights.

We built the BRANDfog BTI Score and Quadrant to be totally transparent. The calculation process is defined, so that there's no ambiguity about how influence scores are determined. Only when we understand exactly what we're measuring can we leverage what we've learned to build solid, executable strategies.The BRANDfog BTI Score and Quadrant are models that identify and measure current patterns of influence, which can then inform a smart strategy to grow leaders' influence among the stakeholders that matter.

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