

## J. Michael Locke

### Musings

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#### #109: Musing January 16, 2021

Our country's political situation has raised some interesting technology issues – specifically the power of big tech in digital public conversation. After the Capitol Hill riot, Twitter permanently blocked Donald Trump and Facebook blocked him indefinitely. Then, Google and Apple remove Parler from the App Store after it had risen to #1 (Parler is a barely moderated Twitter competitor favored by the libertarian crowd). Then the final blow, Amazon refused to host Parler on Amazon Web Services (AWS) effectively shutting it down. These are private businesses which have every right to make these decisions but the fact that they can essentially muzzle the President makes you step back in awe of their power – acknowledged even by Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter.

The core issue is around content moderation. What are the platforms' responsibility to manage what users post? This is the policy issue on Section 230. Under the Communications Decency Act from decades ago, technology platforms were deemed not to be publishers and do not have liability for user posted content. Should that stay the case? The AWS decision also validates my previous endorsement of a “hybrid cloud” model where you are not 100% dependent on one of the major cloud hosting companies.

My conviction that social media is a major negative on society continues to grow. It is facilitating the aggregation of fringe segments of our society as shown by the Capitol Hill riot. It is feeding into the insecurities and challenges of adolescence in a terrible way. We should all start shutting it down. Good article on this (thanks Heather): [why-im-taking-a-social-media-sabbatical](#). Sorry but the Kardashians should not be admired.

As much as I despise social media, streaming is a positive technology development. The results from 2020 are in and Ozark and Office are the big winners. Ozark was the top streamed original series with over 30mm minutes streamed almost double #2 Lucifer. The Office was the stop streamed “acquired” series with 57mm minutes streamed which was 50% higher than #2 Grey's Anatomy. Full results: [tops-of-2020-nielsen-streaming-unwrapped](#)

Great employees take initiative. They are proactive vs reactive. A *good* employee will take an assignment and deliver it on time (if not early) with quality. A *great* employee will move without being asked to. They don't wait to be given an assignment, but rather pre-emptively move to get you a draft of a document or presentation or come up with a new analysis s/he thinks should be considered.

Can someone please keep focused on the alarming rate at which our federal government is borrowing money to fund deficits? Rates are low now but that is not a permanent state. In the quarter ending December, federal government revenue was flat from prior year at approximately \$800 billion while expenses increased 18% to \$1.4 trillion leading to a loss/deficit of a record \$573 billion. That loss/deficit is 61% higher than the same quarter last year. Imagine if you ran your household finances this

way. There are approximately \$150mm individuals in the US paying federal taxes so that December quarter loss funded with debt is \$4,000 for each taxpayer just for the quarter borrowing from China and other U.S. debt purchasers. This is all before Biden's proposed massive \$1.9 trillion new stimulus bill. I am not necessarily against it but we need to have open conversation about the growing national debt and its consequences on our children.

Some new terms this week:

- "Smile states" – California – across the southern part of US – then up the east coast to Carolinas
- "Baby Chaser" – Baby boomers who are following their kids and relocating nearby so they can be near grandkids
- "Sharent" – the parent who overshares on social media

Anybody else annoyed by the "assumed tipping" that is coming with technology. With tablet-based point of sale devices, the employee turns it around and you are presented with various tip options. Now, I am supposed to tip the person for making my subway sandwich or getting my bagel? Danny Meyer (Shake Shack founder) tried to eliminate tipping at his restaurants by just baking it into higher prices. Unfortunately, Meyer's experiment didn't work.

Good riddance to Mike Madigan who has basically run Illinois government since 1983 and overseen the demise of the state to become the largest net exporter of people with the worst unfunded pension obligations. Too bad we can't fire Virginia McCaskey who owns the Bears and perpetuates mediocrity with who she has running the organization. Kudos to Third Point for getting the CEO of Intel changed. That once great company missed the move to mobile, custom chips and outsourced manufacturing and has lost its once dominant leadership position.

Be a source of positivity in your community.

jml