

# INFLUENCING THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON RESPONSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES



**PROTAGONIST**

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As part of an effort to help inform their work and the field, Omidyar Network commissioned Protagonist to better understand the nature of the rapidly evolving conversation about responsibility and technology across the media landscape.



# RESPONSIBILITY OF TECH COMPANIES

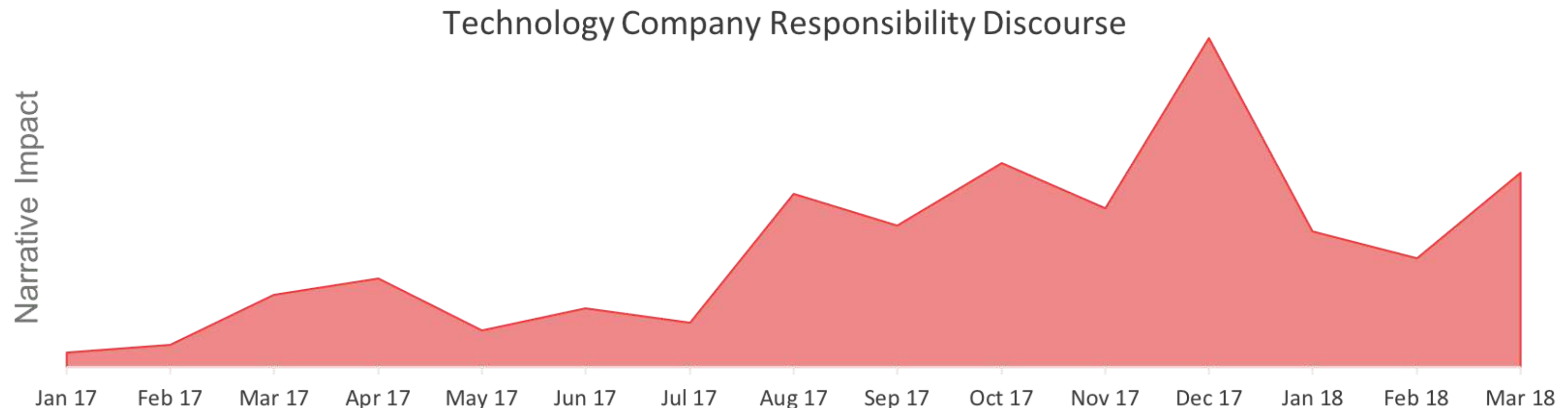
What are the current  
Narratives and how is the  
discourse changing?

Omidyar Network's Tech and Society Solutions Lab is focused on testing, and scaling approaches that help technology live up to its promise as a positive force for change. These solutions aim to prevent, mitigate, and correct the unintended or negative impacts of technology on society.

# THE VOLUME OF CONVERSATION IS INCREASING

***How relevant is the discourse? Narrative Analytics tracks the total volume of conversation and level of engagement among core audiences.***

Unsurprisingly, the volume of conversation about the responsibility of technology to society is on the rise. Between January and December 2017, the volume of the conversation increased more than 10 times and recent media attention is seeing the conversation rise again in 2018.



*What's most interesting is who is talking about what...*

# THREE DIFFERENT KINDS OF NARRATIVES DOMINATE THE DISCOURSE

*What are people talking  
about? What is their story?*

Narrative Analytics breaks down complex discourses into an easy-to-understand framework that outlines the beliefs that matter.

## Activists

Calling for a change and have a solution ready.



## Five Narratives

*Elephant in the Valley  
We Must Rein It In  
Responsibility to Protect  
Make Design More Human  
Disrupt for Good*

## Pragmatists

Aware of the ethical issues that exist within technology, but are not as energized to act. Focused on bringing awareness to the issues.



## Three Narratives

*Dangers of Algorithms  
A.I. for Good  
Panopticon*

## Anti-Reformers

Against culture change and against reforms to make technology more ethical.



## Four Narratives

*Bottom Line First  
Stop Forcing Diversity on Us!  
Homo Deus  
Algorithms Don't Lie*

In this case, there are three main groups engaging in the debates about responsible technology, each espousing a core set of narratives.

# THE NARRATIVES IN DETAIL

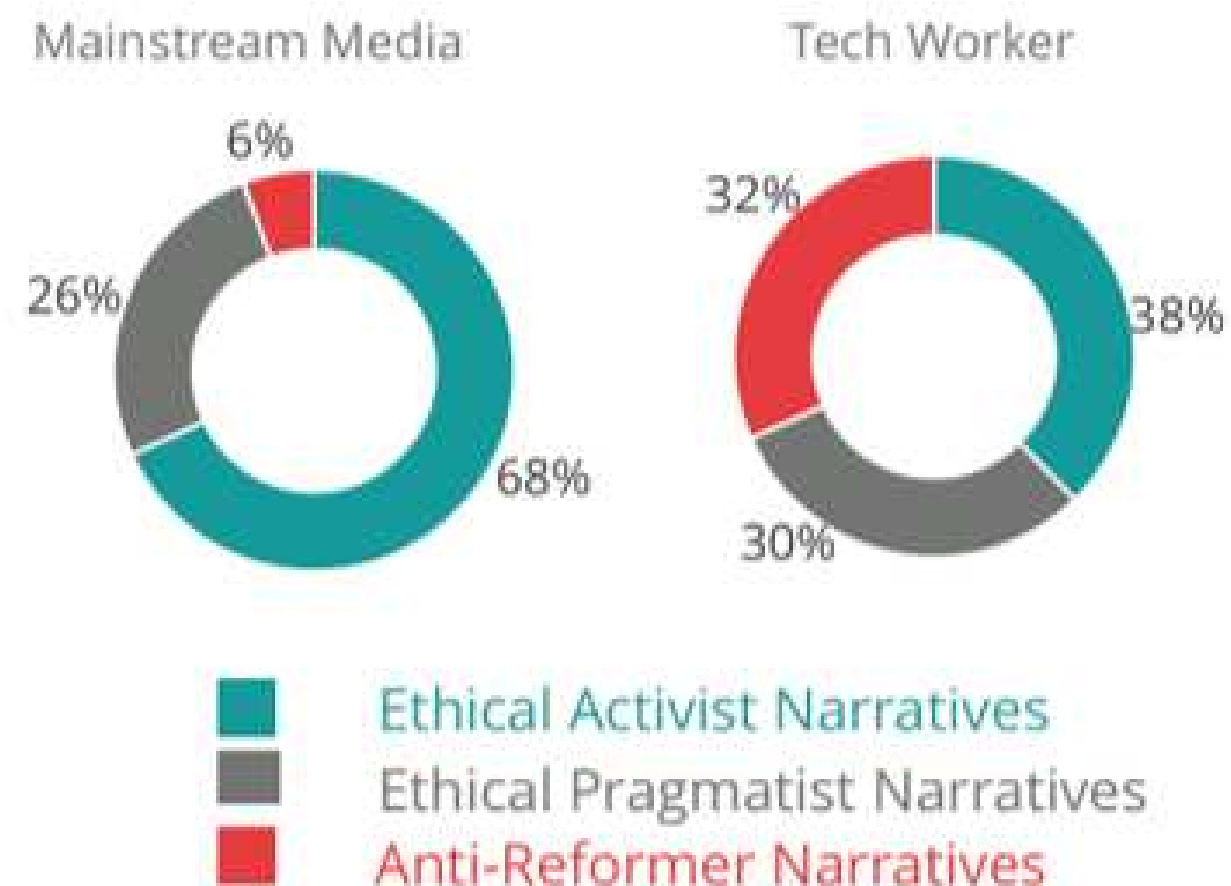
Impact	Narrative Title	Abridged Narrative
19%	<b>We Must Rein It In</b>	<i>We need to slow the rollout of A.I., which is moving too quickly right now. We must do more to implement ethical checks through initiatives and oversight.</i>
19%	<b>Responsibility to Protect</b>	<i>Tech companies must take a stronger and more pro-active role in policing the internet.</i>
16%	<b>Elephant in the Valley</b>	<i>We need to shine a light on the sexist, biased, egotistical Silicon Valley culture, which is unethical and has a negative impact on tech products that we use everyday and the lifestyles we live.</i>
14%	<b>Make Design More Human</b>	<i>Software programmers and the companies they work for must inject the best of humanity into the products.</i>
<1%	<b>Disrupt for Good</b>	<i>As programmers we are ultimately responsible for the code we write so we must stand-up to our employers and resist if our principals are being challenged.</i>
13%	<b>Dangers of Algorithms</b>	<i>If we don't encourage awareness and transparency in the creation process, A.I. has unlimited potential to cause serious harm to our future society.</i>
9%	<b>A.I. for Good</b>	<i>A.I. is already improving many aspects of our lives and making the world a fairer and more equitable place.</i>
4%	<b>Panopticon</b>	<i>Our personal data is being used by tech companies to control consumers in ways they don't fully understand.</i>
3%	<b>Bottom Line First</b>	<i>We are first and foremost a business that cannot let these complex questions impede the potential and quality of our development.</i>
1%	<b>Stop Forcing Diversity on Us</b>	<i>We have a meritocracy that doesn't judge based on gender or race; stop trying to change our culture.</i>
1%	<b>Homo Deus</b>	<i>Silicon Valley is so successful because their leaders took bold risks, stop trying to take down our top executives.</i>
<1%	<b>Algorithms Don't Lie</b>	<i>Algorithms aren't biased – they reflect the true stereotypes whether or not you like it.</i>

# MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND TECH WORKERS ARE TELLING DIFFERENT STORIES

*Which audiences connect with which Narratives? Narrative Analytics identifies how narratives and their resonance differ by audience.*

Mainstream media has given significant attention to Activist voices and narratives. But the conversation among tech workers tells a different story; there Anti-Reformers are significantly more vocal.

## Narrative Balance



The biggest calls to action for change are coming from the media, and not yet being fully embraced or reinforced proportionally by tech workers. The media's core Narratives, Elephant in the Valley and We Must Rein It In are refuted with narratives like Bottom Line First and Stop Forcing Diversity On Us that rise in tech worker blogs in reaction to media criticisms.

# THE DISCOURSE WILL GROW AND BECOME MORE DIVISIVE UNLESS WE TAKE ACTION

This narrative landscape is migrating from an Emerging Landscape, characterized by low volume, a high level of flux, and low level of conflict to a Volatile Landscape, characterized by higher volume, high levels of conflict, and rapid change. Volatile Landscapes can be readily influenced because beliefs are not deeply entrenched – but it requires a deliberate strategy and sustained engagement to keep the discourse from moving wildly in response to shifting media cycles.



This work underscores the pressing need for better solutions. Omidyar Network is exploring partnerships to ensure that technologists and civil society consider and address these issues in a durable and effective fashion. These efforts will build toward a thriving and responsible tech industry that promotes genuine trust and treats all people with dignity.



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