

# NEWSLETTER

## ITECH COMMITTEE

### Amazon loses \$31B after Trump targets them on Twitter over tax practices

Trump wants to change Amazon's tax treatment, the report said, an issue the president raised publicly a year ago when he called for an internet tax for online retailers, even though Amazon already collects sales tax on items it sells direct to customers.



The move came about a week before US President Trump accused the company in a tweet of not paying enough tax, taking advantage of the US postal system and putting small retailers out of business. Amazon still doesn't collect state sales taxes for their "third-party" platform sellers in most of the country, a model that makes up more than 50% of Amazon's business, and in all fairness, is frustrating to more than just Trump.

Amazon could hurt the postal service - and other package companies - if it successfully shifts more of its delivery to its own delivery network, which it's been slowly building out over the past few years.

Economist Michael Mandel notes that while brick-and-mortar retailers have lost 140,00 full-time jobs since 2007, e-commerce companies have added more than 400,000, including better-paying warehouse jobs in fulfillment centers.

Amazon did not initially collect state sales taxes when it began selling books online in 1995. "Although we continue to win customers and grow our package business, these gains are not sufficient to offset continuing declines in our mail business, which is our main source of revenue and contribution", Postmaster General and CEO Megan Brennan said last month.

In a 2017 statement, Amazon said that its partnership with the Postal Service was "reviewed annually by the Postal Regulatory Commission", which found its contracts to be profitable. An independent agency of the US federal government, USPS reported a net loss of \$2.7 billion for fiscal 2017, largely due to increased costs of retirement benefits.

"And as a result, companies like Amazon can buy and sell good without having to pay basic retail taxes that your stores and your convenience stores and all the folks around, when you walk out of

the studio over there and grab something, you have to pay". "If I become president, oh do they have problems", Trump said at a campaign stop in 2016. Some in Congress support legislation to require all e-commerce companies collect state sales tax. Although the service is certainly losing money, the delivery of packages increased by 589m in 2017, which can be partially accredited to Amazon. The company's share price fell following the Axios report and dipped again a day later following Donald Trump's tweet. The

U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule later this year on South Dakota v. Wayfair, which could give local and state governments more authority to mandate sales tax collection by online retailers, Davis said. Trump has repeatedly criticized USPS for charging too little to deliver Amazon's packages, saying its policies are making "Amazon richer" and itself "dumber and poorer". White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said Wednesday no specific policies were now being considered in regards to Amazon. The USPS could charge more. Details of Amazon's payments to USPS are not publicly known. "So has Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, Kroger and any other superstore that took share from small businesses". Soon after Trump's tweet, the White House indicated imposing taxes on such companies. Trump has targeted Amazon for other reasons in the past: its founder and CEO Jeff Bezos personally owns The Washington Post, and Trump has called the newspaper "fake news" and a "guardian of Amazon" after it published unfavorable stories about him or his administration. "It's really about policy".

### What is cryptocurrency ?



Cryptocurrency is a form of digital money that is designed to be secure and, in many cases, anonymous.

It is a currency associated with the internet that uses cryptography, the process of converting legible information into an almost uncrackable code, to track purchases and transfers.

Cryptography was born out of the need for secure communication in the Second World War. It has evolved in the digital era with elements of mathematical theory and computer science to become a way to secure communications, information and money online.

### Why google bans all chrome cryptocurrency mining extensions?

Alphabet's Google has announced a ban on Chrome extensions used to hijack a victim's computer and create cryptocurrency.

In a blog post, the U.S. technology giant said extensions—small pieces of downloadable software that provide new functions on a user's computer—will no longer be allowed to host crypto-mining code. An audit found that roughly 90 percent of such extensions on the platform were ignoring Google policies.

The process, known as cryptojacking, covertly runs illicit computer code—often without the consent of the victim. It consumes high levels of CPU power and can severely impact system performance. Cybersecurity experts have said the most popular "mined" cryptocurrencies include Bitcoin and Monero.

## The Case That Never Ends: Oracle Wins Latest



Oracle's nearly eight-year legal battle with Google just won't end. The federal appeals court ruled that Google violated Oracle's copyrights when it built a custom version of the Java platform for its Android operating system. The court sent the case back to a district court to decide how much Google should pay Oracle. But Google can appeal to the Supreme Court. And it should, because the decision will affect not just Google and Oracle, but the entire software industry.

The case revolves around what are called "application programming interfaces," or APIs. To oversimplify a bit, APIs are the way different pieces of software interact with each other. Software companies have long borrowed APIs from existing products to either ensure compatibility between products or to make it easier for programmers to learn new technologies. Google used the Java APIs in part to make it easier for Java programmers to build Android apps without learning an entirely new language. Now companies large and small who've taken similar steps could face a swarm of copyright lawsuits.

"This creates a tremendous incentive for lawyers and copyright trolls to look for litigation," says Electronic Frontier Foundation legal director Corynne McSherry.

Oracle doesn't see it that way. The opinion "upholds fundamental principles of copyright law and makes clear that Google violated the law," Oracle general counsel Dorian Daley said in a statement. "This decision protects creators and consumers from the unlawful abuse of their rights."

## Will Smith friend-zoned by Humanoid robot Sophia.

Referring to his film 'I, Robot', in which he plays technophobic cop who investigates a crime that may have been committed by a robot, the 49-year-old actor joked that Sophia put him in the friends list because he shared a bad 'history' with Artificial Intelligence. "I just met Sophia the Robot. She wasn't feelin' me. I guess based on my history with robots," Smith wrote on Instagram alongside a picture that shows him leaning in for a kiss with the robot.



"Sophia can I be honest with you. I don't know whether it's the island air or the humidity but you just so easy to talk to, you've got a clear head, literally," Smith said in the clip. But when he leaned for a kiss, Sophia said, "I think we can be friends. Let's hang out and get to know each other for a little while. You are on my friends list now." On realising he overreached, Smith tried changing the subject by pointing out he saw a whale in the ocean. "Yeah read that wrong. Oh whale, I just saw a whale. Does your head fog up in this kind of weather?"

## What she said?

"Technology and artificial intelligence can help us take a big leap in ending poverty, hunger, ensuring better health, fighting corruption and ensuring gender equality. Machines and robots are here to make life easier, with the help of the Internet, we can connect remote parts of the country to the rest of the world and deliver quality education and other services. We can have direct access to the people living in remote areas with the advancement in telemedicine and education sector. Nepal has been gradually developing in the technological sector that will help the overall development of the country still recovering from the aftermath of the devastating 2015 earthquake. She welcomed the people gathered to see her with a warm 'Namaste' and thanked the people for their presence with a 'Dhanyabad'."

## Stephen Hawking's tailor-made hi-tech wheelchair to live on as a legacy



Stephen Hawking's tailor-made hi-tech wheelchair and his computer-generated voice are expected to live on as a legacy of the world-famous theoretical physicist who died earlier this month aged 76. According to 'The Sunday Times', the scientist's family hope that his wheelchair and voice systems could help preserve his memory and are open to offers from museums.

One of the ideas under consideration is for the Science Museum in London to commemorate Hawking's life with an exhibition featuring one of his two wheelchairs as a centrepiece, accompanied by recordings of his lectures. Computer engineers had spent four years rebuilding the 33-year-old synthesiser that created Hawking's robotic tones after it was in danger of failing. "We fixed the new system to his wheelchair on January 26," Peter Benie, a computing specialist at Cambridge University who co-led the project, told the newspaper.

"It was the same voice but much clearer. He was using it to talk with his family but he died before it could be heard in public. I would be happy to hear it used to repeat his lectures," he said. The wheelchair, made in Sweden and capable of travelling 20 miles at 8mph on one charge, combined technology from around the world. Its computer, a Lenovo from China, used an American-made infrared sensor on his glasses to "read" his cheek movements.

Hawking's voice was developed by Dennis Klatt, a US scientist who based it on his own speech. The "CallText 5010" system based on Klatt's work delighted Hawking so much that he bought three but when the last began failing, it was too old to fix. Hawking had famously rejected all ideas of an afterlife. "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story," he said.

He had been diagnosed with motor neuron disease in his 20s, which meant he spent much of his life in a wheelchair. For his friends and family the wheelchair was central to his identity, which would now most likely have an afterlife. Thousands lined the streets of Cambridge yesterday for the private funeral of the author of 'A Brief History of Time' at the University Church of St. Mary the Great. It was announced earlier this month that Hawking's ashes will be buried near the grave of Isaac Newton, another famous British scientist, during a thanksgiving service at Westminster Abbey in London on June 15.