

Social Media Surveillance Expands as IBM Taps Twitter

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Public outrage about the global spy network continues to be ignored as corporations and governments announce open partnerships in harvesting all of our data. Social media is one particular playground for data brokers who feast upon the information we “willingly” provide.

I reported recently about Twitter’s [ChatterGrabber](#) program that is “used to monitor tickborne diseases, such as Lyme disease, public sentiment involving vaccines, and gun violence and terrorism, serving as an early warning system for public health officials through suspicious tweets or conversations.” That story was followed shortly after by the announcement that [Twitter would open up its entire database to MIT](#) beginning with its very first Tweet in 2006. We know that Facebook has used their algorithms to go beyond surveillance and actually [manipulate the emotions of users](#) as a type of psychology experiment. The [“Truthy”](#) study, funded by the National Science Foundation, directly targets political speech: One focus is the spread of “political smears, astroturfing, misinformation, and other social pollution.” Even a Republican member of the FCC said that it was a program right out of a George Orwell novel.

No matter – now tech behemoth IBM has its sights set on Twitter.

Transcript: Christian Bryant

It’s no secret Twitter’s data and analytics have been highly sought after — most likely because of numbers like these: 500 million tweets sent per day between more than 280 million active monthly users.

Tech giant and consulting company IBM wants in on that information. IBM and Twitter announced a data and analytics partnership Wednesday to enhance what IBM calls “enterprise decisions.”

That sounds a little jargon-y, but the deal basically allows IBM unprecedented access to Twitter’s data, which IBM can then use to help its other clients learn more about their customers.

Twitter VP of Data Strategy Chris Moody wrote in a [statement](#) the social media network “unleashing” its value will help IBM clients to answer questions, like, “‘What do customers like best about my products?’ or ‘Why are we growing quickly in Brazil?’”

According to [IBM](#), all that new data will be integrated within their cloud-based services and, of course, Watson — IBM’s Jeopardy-winning supercomputer.

IBM CEO Ginni Rometty spoke earlier this month about reshaping the company around the cloud and analytics. (Video via [CNBC](#))

The partnership with Twitter seems to be part of IBM’s move in that direction. According to [Business Insider](#), Rometty said IBM also plans to develop new apps that use Twitter’s data for other companies.

So, what exactly does Twitter get out of this? The two companies revealed that this partnership has been “years” in the making, but they haven’t announced any figures associated with the deal.

A [Wall Street Journal](#) writer says Twitter “has been searching for ways to boost revenue beyond advertising,” hinting that the company is probably selling use of the data to IBM.

Just spitballing here, but this partnership could also allow Twitter an opportunity to earn back the \$36 million it paid to IBM for 900 patents.

That deal was a part an [IBM lawsuit against Twitter](#), which was settled around the end of last year.

But at the time, both companies added a positive spin to the deal with an [IBM executive saying](#), “We look forward to a productive relationship with Twitter in the future.”

We assume *this* is that productive relationship. Bloomberg reports services from the technological marriage will be available starting in the first quarter of 2015.

This video includes images from Getty Images.

It is exactly this type of breach of trust that is leading people toward decentralized, non-corporate tech solutions. Alternative social media platforms like [Elo](#) are finally beginning to crop up – many more are needed.

Naturally, such a well-funded and well-orchestrated machine with the fascist trappings of the current surveillance matrix will be difficult to undermine, especially as [Europe](#) and [the U.S.](#) have taken direct aim at crowdfunding, which offers a true people’s choice about where to put their money.

Do you have alternative solutions? Please leave your thoughts in the comment section below.

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