

Trump tells anxious tech leaders: 'We're here to help'

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Apple CEO Tim Cook, right, and PayPal founder Peter Thiel, center, listen as President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with technology industry leaders at Trump Tower in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

President-elect Donald Trump, who faced fierce opposition from some Silicon Valley leaders during the election campaign, strove to assure the titans of tech on Wednesday that his administration is "here to help you

folks do well."

Trump, still savoring his election victory, convened a summit at Trump Tower for nearly a dozen tech leaders, whose industry largely supported Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. Many in the industry are worried that Trump will stifle innovation, curb the hiring of computer-savvy immigrants and infringe on consumers' digital privacy.

He immediately tried to allay those fears.

"We want you to keep going with the incredible innovation. Anything we can do to help this go on, we will be there for you," Trump said. "You'll call my people, you'll call me. We have no formal chain of command around here."

The CEOs who filled the table in Trump's 25th floor conference room included Apple's Tim Cook, Alphabet's Larry Page, Google's Eric Schmidt, Microsoft's Satya Nadella, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Tesla's Elon Musk, IBM's Ginni Rometty, Oracle's Safra Catz and Cisco Systems' Chuck Robbins. Facebook's [chief operating officer](#), Sheryl Sandberg, attended instead of its CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, who is one of many tech executives who have expressed misgivings about Trump's pledge to deport millions of immigrants who are in the country illegally.



President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with technology industry leaders at Trump Tower in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. From left are, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Alphabet CEO Larry Page, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, Vice President-elect Mike Pence, and Trump. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

The meeting remained amiable and the group, which agreed to meet quarterly, also had preliminary discussions about immigration and how to stay competitive with China, though no firm commitments were made, according to a person briefed on the meeting but not authorized to discuss it publicly.

Trump was joined by several members of his senior staff and his three eldest children, who are expected to help run his business once he takes office, again blurring the line between the president-elect's personal and professional lives.

Reporters were allowed to witness only the first moments of the meeting and most of the attendees departed without comment. But Bezos, who is also owner of The Washington Post, which has been a frequent target of Trump complaints about campaign coverage, said he found the meeting to be "very productive" and said he "shared the view that the administration should make innovation one of its key pillars."

No industry was more open in its contempt for Trump during the campaign. In an open letter published in July, more than 140 technology executives, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists skewered him as a "disaster for innovation."



From left, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Alphabet CEO Larry Page and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg listen as President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with technology industry leaders at Trump Tower in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

And Trump's denigration of Mexicans, his pledge to deport millions of immigrants now living in the U.S. illegally and his crude remarks about women were widely viewed as racist, authoritarian and sexist by an industry that prides itself on its tolerance.

Trump, in turn, sometimes lashed out at the industry and its leaders, and—despite his reassurances Wednesday—questions remain about how he'll govern.

He has lambasted Bezos for the Post's campaign coverage and has suggested that Amazon could face antitrust scrutiny after his election. Trump also rebuked Cook for fighting a government order requiring Apple to unlock an encrypted iPhone used by a shooter in last year's terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California.

And Trump's repeated negative comments about immigrants raised fears that he might dismantle programs that have enabled tech companies to hire tens of thousands of foreign workers with the skills to write computer programs, design web pages and build mobile apps.



Apple CEO Tim Cook listens as President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with technology industry leaders at Trump Tower in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

The industry is also worried that Trump might try to undermine "[net neutrality](#)," a regulation requiring internet service providers to offer equal access to all online services. Trump's harsh characterization of the media as dishonest and unfair has raised other fears that he might try to restrict free speech online.

Some in Silicon Valley think the industry's best move would be to keep its distance until Trump changes his tone. Former Google executive Chris Sacca, now a tech investor, argues that industry leaders should have steered clear of the meeting altogether.

Sitting down with the president-elect "would only make sense after

Trump has given public assurances he won't encourage censorship, will stop exploiting fake news, will promote net neutrality, denounce hate crimes and embrace science," Sacca said. "If and until then, tech figures who visit are being used to whitewash an authoritarian bully who threatens not just our industry but our entire democracy."

One major tech company not invited, despite Trump's frequent use of its product, was Twitter. Sean Spicer, communications director for the Republican National Committee, disputed that they were singled out—Twitter has said it declined to make branded emojis on the campaign's behalf—and explained its absence by simply saying "the conference table was only so big, OK?"



Amazon founder Jeff Bezos speaks during a meeting with President-elect Donald Trump and technology industry leaders at Trump Tower in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Separately on Wednesday, Michigan's Republican Chairwoman Ronna Romney McDaniel was officially named Trump's choice to become the new RNC chair next year. The niece of 2012 GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney would be the first woman to hold the committee's top position in 40 years, and her promotion comes after Trump became the first Republican to carry Michigan in 28 years.

Trump also officially announced his selection of former Texas Gov. Rick Perry as his secretary of energy, leading a department Perry once suggested scrapping.

While Trump remained in his Manhattan skyscraper Wednesday, he was hitting the road Thursday for the latest stop in his "thank you" tour, this time in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The tour, which is designed to salute supporters in states that helped him win the White House, will continue Friday in Orlando, Florida, before wrapping Saturday at a Mobile, Alabama, football stadium which was the site of the biggest rally of his campaign.

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