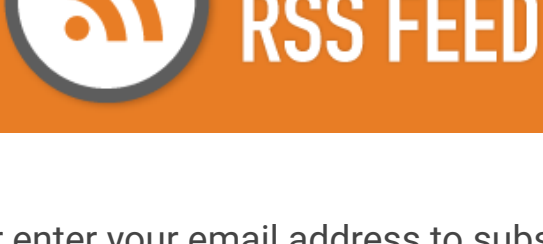


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The Collision of Technology and Politics

July 20, 2017 · by Vsem Yenovkian



by Vsem Yenovkian

If I posed the question “Who was the first President to have an email account while in office?” I’m sure many of you would think the answer would be Bill Clinton or George W. Bush. Surely the two presidents who were in charge during the growth of the internet were using email, right?

It might shock you to learn that the answer is actually Barack Obama...in 2009. No, that’s not a misprint. When it comes to the **tech adoption lifecycle**, Presidents were definitely in the “laggards” category.

So yes, even well after your grandparents started using email, a sitting US President got an email account.



Why can't I email the President?

Technology and Politics – Like Oil and Water

It seems hard to imagine this only 8 short years later, since the **President tweets from the Oval Office** on a regular basis, but technology and politics generally didn’t mix for a long time. As disruptive as technology has been within society, it took Washington many years to catch on.

To further illustrate the point, **the first time cybersecurity became a topic during a presidential debate was in 2016**. It’s seems unfathomable to believe that cybersecurity wasn’t considered to be worthy of being a topic of debate until last year, but it’s true.

It just goes to show you how far apart technology and politics have been throughout American history.

Two Worlds Collide

Which brings us to 2017. If, up until now, you could say that tech and politics ran on parallel roads then there is no doubt that today the two intersect. It is a fiery train wreck of an intersection, but they are definitely intersecting.

Between tweeting politicians, **email server leaks**, and **election tampering accusations**, technology has never been more prevalent in politics. The notion of a politician NOT using email isn’t just quaint but it’s inconceivable.

It’s clear to any observer that the technology door that President Obama opened has been blown wide open by President Trump. Love him or hate him, there’s no denying the power and influence his Twitter account had in getting him elected.

Even today, six months after the inauguration, President Trump is active on social media. Every single one of his tweets garnering instant attention and reaction. For better or worse, this type of direct connection between a President and the public would have been unbelievable even 10 years ago.

This intersection of politics and technology isn’t just limited to the President. Every elected official is active on social media. Where before issues were debated on Capitol Hill, they are now debated on social media.

There is Precedence for this Era

It’s clear that more than ever, technology has taken a significant role in politics. However, this isn’t the first time technology played a role in a candidates’ rise to power. There are clear parallels between this era and the late 1950s when television was becoming the dominant medium.

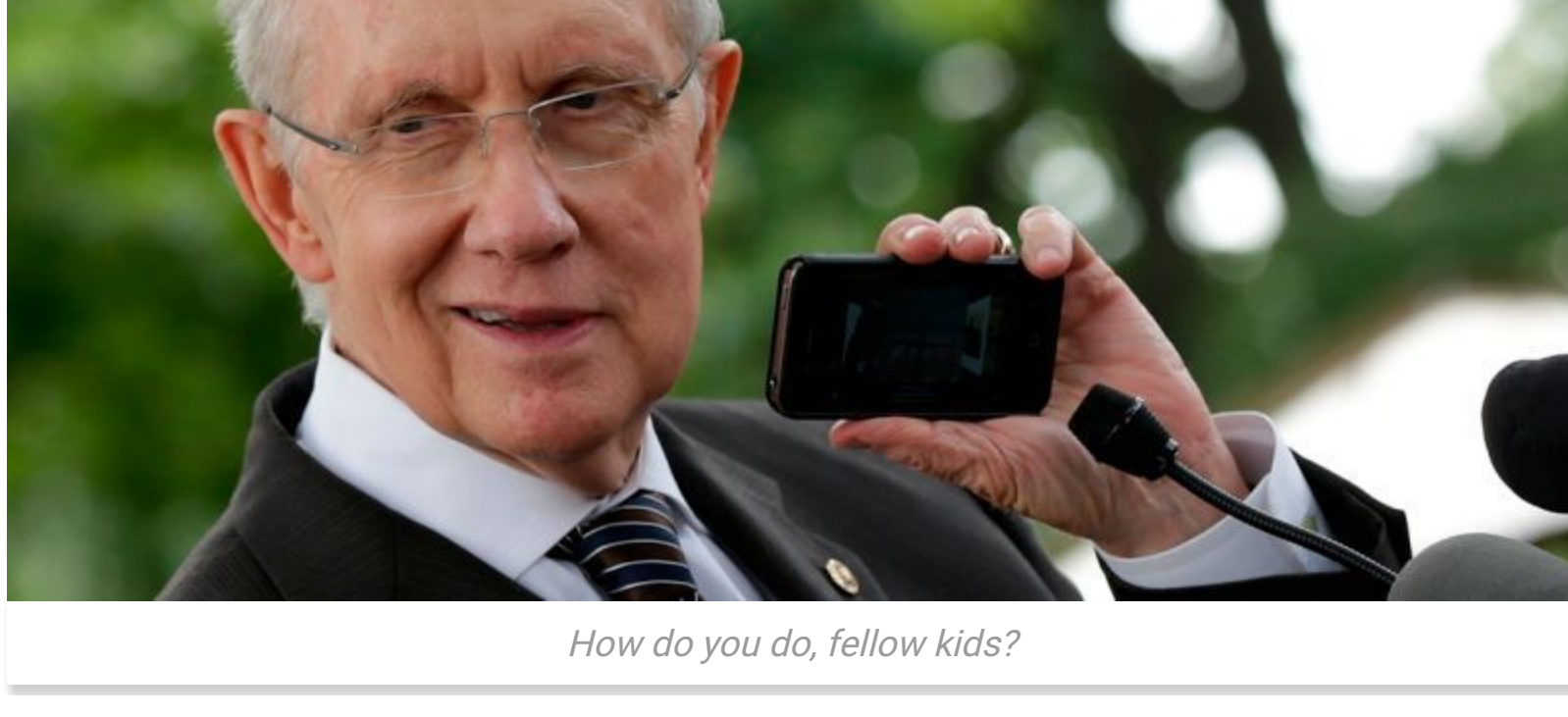
With this new visual format, it was a young handsome senator from Massachusetts that captured the public’s attention. The Presidential debate of 1960 was a watershed moment in television in how it influenced the election. Even though **listeners on the radio thought Richard Nixon won the debate**, it was John F. Kennedy that resonated with viewers on television.

John F. Kennedy won that election in 1960 and today he is considered **the first TV president**. That election victory sent a signal that any future candidate with presidential aspirations needs to conquer the visual elements as much as the oral ones.

The Future of Politics is Even More Technology

It is clear that we are now in a similar era of technology impacting politics. Any future presidential candidate will need to be as much of a force online that Donald Trump was last year, to even have a chance at getting elected.

Much in the same way that candidates worked on their TV personas after 1960, we will see candidates grooming their online personas now.



How do you do, fellow kids?

Going forward we can expect the 2020 election cycle to be the most technology-dominant one. In much the same way that **national security was the driving force of the 2004 elections**, expect cybersecurity to become a tangible platform for candidates to run on.

There’s no going back now. Technology and politics are intertwined more than ever before. This new era of PoliTech has shaken the most archaic institution and changed it forever.

Good or bad, we should get used to parties, candidates, and platforms becoming tech-centric and embrace this new way of life in politics. After all, it surely beats the days of not being able to email the President.

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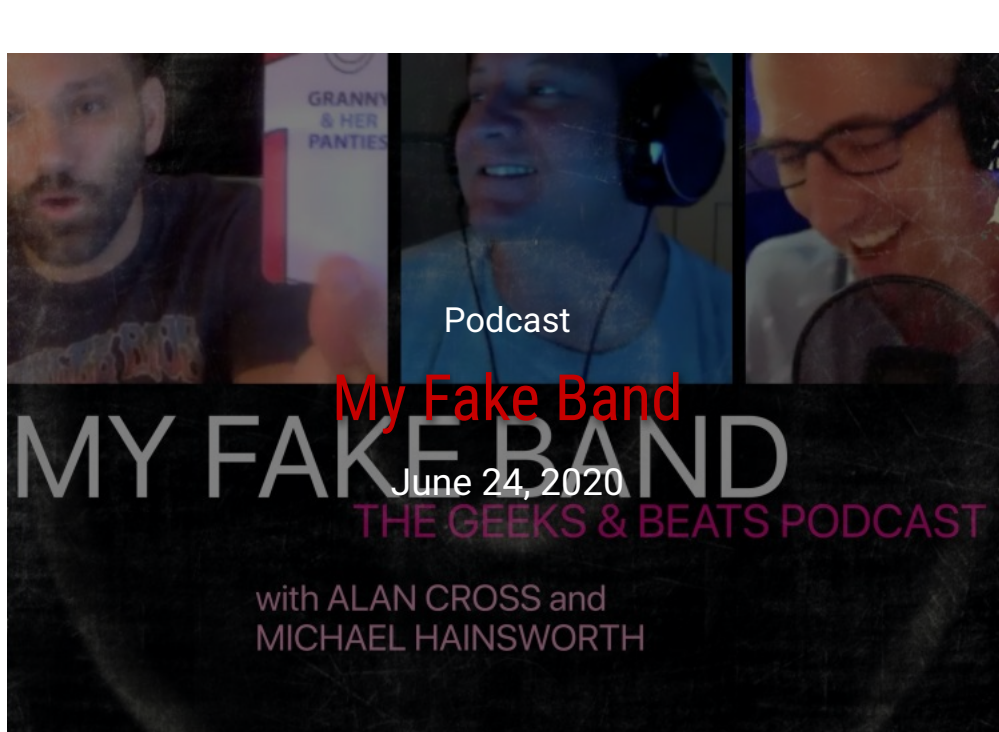
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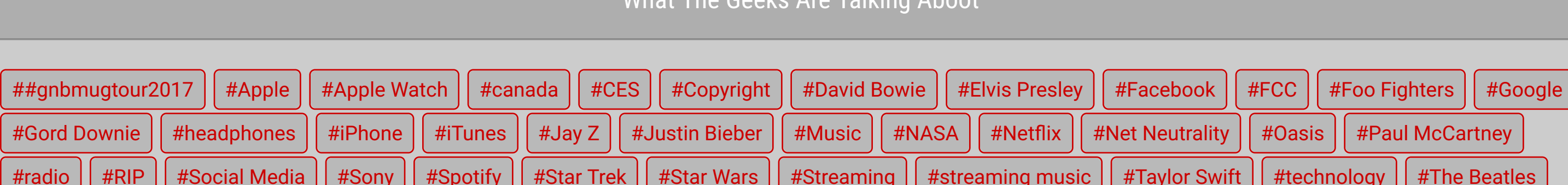
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