OUR VISION FOR A RESPONSIBLE TECH FUTURE
Executive Summary

As digital technology continues to radically change all aspects of our daily lives, society is at a crossroads. We can allow these changes to wash over us like a tidal wave and take our chances with the damage that follows. Or we can be clear about the role digital technology can play in supporting and improving our lives. At present, we are veeringly dangerously close to following the first path, swayed by beliefs and mindsets resigned to a predestined future, and trapped in outdated beliefs that any intervention will somehow stymie innovation. But Omidyar Network believes the second option is not only possible, but urgent, timely, and necessary.

As early investors in technology innovations and start-ups, Omidyar Network is a long-time supporter of the power and potential of digital technology. We also understand the need to be deliberate in the way we direct that power and shape that potential. To this end, our Point of View reflects what we believe must happen to ensure a responsible tech future.

The ideas presented are driven by three guiding principles:

1. Digital technology should be guided by a democratic[1] vision of a good society.

To ensure technology works for us—and not the other way around. For too long, we have allowed digital tech to outpace society, to operate unmoored from any vision or intent or governing framework. It's not surprising, then, that we get so many negative outcomes that are in the news daily.

2. Digital tech is different. And yet, in many ways the same.

We can draw lessons from past tech revolutions, but to lead—rather than be led by—digital technology, we must also explore and develop new strategies to address its unique characteristics and challenges.

3. We need to build out the entire system.

To choose the second path and create and encourage technology that supports the society we want to live in, we must not only engage entities and policies that drive the system, but also work to shift the mindsets, norms, participation, and ethics that shape the system.

> "Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them."

Steve Jobs
Co-founder of Apple Computer

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With these three guiding principles, we identified six core elements that must be fully developed and firmly integrated with one another to create a healthy digital tech system. They include:

1.   Inclusive Participation

Representation matters. Healthy digital technology requires all voices at the table at every level, from those who finance and create it to those who govern it to those who deliver it.

2.   Stronger Ethics, Greater Transparency

We must establish clear ethical codes and norms that are grounded in shared values, free of biases, and designed to assess and address the impact of technology on individuals as well as communities.

3.   New Paradigms

The prevailing neoliberal paradigm that has failed our economy also undermines digital technology. We need new paradigms that prioritize people on the same level as profit, actively recognize that regulation and innovation are not zero sum, and equate data's value to fairness and contribution.

4.   Meaningful Oversight

Stronger rules and regulations are critical to address and channel digital technology's effect on all aspects of society, to minimize harm and maximize pro-social outcomes.

5.   Expansive Innovation

We need the freedom to experiment and explore new ways to use technology for good—and the resources, patience, and new financing models to turn the very best of those ideas into realities.

6.   Empowered Consumers, Responsive Makers

For digital technology to work for consumers and communities, makers and developers must purposefully engage with them to understand their real needs and lived experiences, and our education systems must do a better job of equipping people for the digital world.

The six elements required for a responsible digital technology system are the same characteristics necessary for a healthy and thriving society. Everyone who works to advance racial justice, equitable opportunity, jobs, and a healthy democracy has a stake in supporting a healthy digital tech future.

We hope our vision encourages other philanthropists, technologists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, academics, advocates, movement leaders, students, consumers, investors, and others to join us. Together, we have the ingenuity and the power to create a digital technology system that benefits individuals, communities, and society far into the future. We must have the collective intention to do so. It's not too late.

To read "Our Vision for a Responsible Tech Future", visit:
omidyar.com/responsible_tech_future.

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