



The people who inspired me in 2016

Published on December 13, 2016 | Featured in: [Editor's Picks](#), [Social Impact](#), [Technology](#), [What Inspires Me](#)



Satya Nadella [in](#)fluencer | [Follow](#)
CEO at Microsoft

4,843
 176
 626

One of the things I enjoy most about my job is the opportunity to travel to new places, learn from others and see the world through someone else’s eyes. Reflecting on 2016, I’m struck by how many incredible people I’ve had the privilege to meet who are driving real impact in their communities and in society. Their work has moved me personally and have served as a reminder of just how much the rising digital era is empowering people to make things and make things happen. Here are the stories of a few of those who inspired me this year.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS AT THE WOMEN’S SOCIAL INNOVATION HUB IN CAIRO

I kicked off 2016 visiting the Middle East. In Egypt, I met with a number of young entrepreneurs and developers at the [Social Innovation Hub](#) in Cairo. The facility was created to help foster the spirit of innovation and social entrepreneurship among young graduates and equip them with the skills and resources to develop technologies that address societal challenges. I was struck by the ingenuity of these young developers and their creative solutions — from an app helping people locate pharmacies for urgent medical care to a service providing Syrian refugees with local information and



MIGUEL DE ICAZA AND NAT FRIEDMAN | CO-FOUNDERS, XAMARIN, AND DISTINGUISHED ENGINEER AND CORPORATE VICE PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT

As co-founders of Xamarin, Nat and Miguel have been determined advocates for advancing the tools available to developers. I am so thrilled to have the opportunity to work with them at Microsoft, as they and the team pursue their passion to empower every developer to write any application on any platform.

SAQIB SHAIKH | SOFTWARE ENGINEER, MICROSOFT

Saqib is one developer that I've been incredibly inspired by this year. Saqib discovered his love for computer science after losing the use of his eyes at the age of seven. He's since channeled this passion and empathy into building an accessible solution that can have true impact. [Seeing AI](#) is an ongoing research project that uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to help visually impaired or blind people better "see" and experience the world around them. This is the opportunity for developers — to dream, build and create the future. Saqib captured it beautifully: "As engineers we are always standing on the shoulders of giants and building on top of what went before. For me it's about taking that far-off dream and building it one step at a time."

MIKAILA ULMER | SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND FOUNDER, ME & THE BEES

I always enjoy meeting with other CEOs and entrepreneurs. One of the most impressive entrepreneurs I met this year is 11-year-old Mikaila Ulmer, of Me & the Bees. Mikaila's pursuit of her dream to save honeybees is truly inspiring, because not only is she doing well by doing good, she's [demonstrating](#) to so many other young people that they too can make a difference.

JEFF IMMELT | CEO, GE

I've enjoyed getting to know Jeff more as our partnership has expanded, and I was intrigued with his perspective on the new ethos of multinational companies in his [commencement address](#) at NYU Stern. Having been at the helm of GE for 15 years, Jeff has a unique perspective about the role of global multinationals in contributing to the



DR. STANLEY RIDDELL | IMMUNOTHERAPY RESEARCHER AND ONCOLOGIST, FRED HUTCHINSON CANCER RESEARCH CENTER

I was thrilled to join the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center's board of trustees this year. I have long been fascinated by the advancements in cancer research and think this is an area where cloud computing and machine learning can help scientists take big steps forward in the coming years. Since joining the board, I've been able to spend time at Fred Hutch and learn more about the pioneering work the doctors and researchers are doing there. Dr. Stan Riddell is a rare combination of brilliant smarts and tremendous empathy, and is leading the fight against some of the toughest cancers. Stan has studied immunotherapy, or how to empower the immune system to effectively combat diseases, for more than 25 years. What's really exciting, however, is that the [successful strides](#) made by his team in recent years mean immunotherapy is incredibly close to becoming a key component of cancer therapy for the masses. His ambition and determination to make a difference in patients' lives is humbling and inspiring.

MICROSOFT 2016 SUMMER INTERN CLASS

"Doers, not talkers" — this year's [2016 summer class](#) absolutely lived the Microsoft Garage motto. As the most diverse intern class at Microsoft to date, they united their unique backgrounds to create amazing projects like Write Ideas (an inclusive mobile app that will help people with learning differences more easily convey their ideas from conception to outline) and Project Santorini (an app that provides a new way to go through old photos using metadata). Their energy, excitement and ideas leave me no doubt that we're looking at several of tomorrow's technology leaders.

DIEGO COMIN | PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

This summer I invited Diego Comin to meet with me to discuss how we can encourage inclusive economic growth. He has painstakingly studied the evolution of technology diffusion over the past two centuries in countries throughout the world, and has concluded that the differences between rich and poor nations can largely be explained by the speed at which they adopted industrial technologies. But, he says, what's equally important is the intensity by which they put new technologies to work. This means that even when countries that were slow to adopt new technologies eventually catch up, it's the intensity of how they use the technology — not simply the access — that can create great economic opportunity.



I deeply admire Malala's work to advocate for women and girls around the world. Her persistence in championing for safe, quality education for the millions of girls being denied that right is awe-inspiring. Malala has given a voice to the voiceless and inspired countless others to persevere and fight for what they believe in.

DR. CHRIS WHITE | PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER, MICROSOFT

I'd be hard-pressed to find a better example of someone who bridges the gap between technology and action than Dr. Chris White. Chris' [incredible work](#) to combat human trafficking on the web through the development of a search engine called Memex [earned](#) him a well-deserved Presidential Award this year. Chris and his team at Microsoft are currently developing software for data science, focusing on the intersection of artificial intelligence and business intelligence for scalable interaction with data.

MARK POLLOCK | ADVENTURE ATHLETE AND SPEAKER

I was honored to meet with Mark Pollock in Ireland this year, where we engaged with teachers and students at St. Patrick's College to discuss the ways technology is changing how students learn. Mark is an extreme adventurer and athlete who has raced to the South Pole — and even more incredibly, he was the first blind man to ever do so. Mark is a [brilliant example](#) of the fact that we can always achieve more than what we think is possible.

BLOCKCHAIN HACKADEMY DEVELOPERS, PARIS, FRANCE

As global businesses seek to grow, compete and become more agile, technology like Blockchain is becoming an increasingly significant part of driving their successful digital transformations. However, the amazing value proposition delivered by this innovative data structure is still unfamiliar to many. The solution? Developers. A couple months ago, I got to meet 50 developers participating in the Blockchain Hackademy in Paris, an intensive 20-day initiative designed to spark proofs of concept for a range of industries — projects ranging from electronic voting solutions to logistics and supply chain management to crowdfunding and smart grids. I left feeling energized about the possibilities that lie ahead.



Search for people, jobs, companies, and more...



Advanced



Home Profile My Network Learning Jobs Interests

Business Services Try Premium for free

Sir Richard is widely regarded as one of the finest cricketers in history, and to me, he will always be one of my first childhood heroes. I had a real dream come true recently, when I met Sir Richard during my travels to New Zealand. While his career on the pitch is the stuff of legends, it's how he's translated that ambition and talent into inspiring the next generation of cricket greats that is truly remarkable. And the experience came full circle for me when I learned that his son Nicholas is one of our Microsoft MVPs — a small world indeed.

THE MINECRAFT GENERATION

One of the best parts of my job is visiting schools and meeting with students who are embracing computer science and coding at an early age. This year, I've been immersed in the worlds students from Madrid to Tokyo to Sydney have created in Minecraft. The computational thinking and problem-solving skills they learn through these programs will help equip them for the jobs of the future in every industry. That is why I'm so excited about how I've seen our youngest generations using Minecraft this year — not just as a game but as a platform to create and explore innovative new worlds using technology.

As we count down to 2017, I hope each of you have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences from the past year and carry the spirit of learning forward into the new year.



Report this



Satya Nadella fluencer
CEO at Microsoft
12 articles

Follow

176 comments

Newest ▾



Leave your thoughts here...



Arsalan Khan, M.Sc.
Business & IT Transformation Leader | Speaker | Writer

... 16h



Search for people, jobs, companies, and more...



Advanced



Home Profile My Network Learning Jobs Interests

Business Services

Try Premium for free



Teresa Dahl

Sr Recruiter | Microsoft Services | Wake Up! Be Present, Be...

... 17h

You allow us to travel with you, seeing the world through your eyes. Thank you!

Like Reply | 1

There are 174 other comments. [Show more.](#)

Don't miss more articles by Satya Nadella



Microsoft + LinkedIn: Beginning our Journey Together

Satya Nadella on LinkedIn



A Cloud for Global Good

Satya Nadella on LinkedIn



Reinventing Business Processes

Satya Nadella on LinkedIn

Looking for more of the latest headlines on LinkedIn?

[Discover more stories](#)

[Help Center](#) | [About](#) | [Careers](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Talent Solutions](#) | [Sales Solutions](#) | [Small Business](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Language](#) | [Upgrade Your Account](#)

LinkedIn Corporation © 2017 | [User Agreement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Ad Choices](#) | [Community Guidelines](#) | [Cookie Policy](#) | [Copyright Policy](#) | [Send Feedback](#)