Petzel

The Editors, "So Few People, So Much Influence," *New York Magazine*, November 2, 2026.



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AI has minted a new power structure. A handful of private companies command the might and wealth of small nation-states and are mostly left to self-govern. A few dozen employees are on the brink of becoming centimillionaires and considering which causes and presidential candidates they will funnel their vast resources toward. The industry is perpetually one breakthrough away from a step change in capability or public adoption, the question of who gets there first dependent on the specific expertise and visions of a handful of engineers.

One way to tell the story of how AI is changing our world is through some newly familiar names. Sam Altman and Dario Amodei are locked in a race to build AGI and persuade President Donald Trump to regulate the technology to their liking. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang and venture capitalist David Sacks are advocating for the president to take a light touch, concerned about how regulation might jeopardize America's dominance. As these figures have scaled their public influence, their surrogates and spokespeople (OpenAI president Greg Brockman, top OpenAI lobbyist Chris Lehane, Anthropic co-founder Jack Clark) have populated news stories, too.

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But an astonishing amount of power rests in the hands of a few dozen other people, none particularly well known, some virtually anonymous. So *New York* Magazine has dedicated this year's annual "Power" issue to surfacing 26 people whose influence on the AI landscape far outstrips their fame. To assemble the list, we partnered with *Transformer,* a small but impressive publication with a command of the politics within transformative AI. The *Transformer* team drew on its years of reporting, as well as new interviews with more than 50 high-ranking industry leaders, to help articulate what makes these people powerful. We then commissioned multi-media artist Simon Denny to create images of each.[1]

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Despite the hundreds of billions in capex and upcoming IPOs, many parts of the field are immature, which means those who decide how AI is built, adopted, and controlled can quickly become among the most influential people in the world. A few on this list, for example, are tasked with shaping how the public, or a company, thinks about the technology — a high-leverage role for a field where everyone's views are still being formed. (This is, in part, why AI has such an "essay"-driven culture — a blog post really can cause a seismic change.) Some will invent entirely new product categories, reimagining how we interact with AI, while others can spin up new industries or advocacy groups with a single check. Who is ahead and who is behind can change almost overnight (just look at Microsoft), which helps explain why a legacy tech CEO could have less sway over what Altman thinks than a 26-year-old with a podcast and why an engineer who runs a new critical function may appear on this list instead of a colleague who sits several rungs higher in their org chart. (Relatedly, the list's average age is 36. It is also overwhelmingly male.)

The AI scene is still small. The 26 individuals on our "Power List" are remarkably intertwined, some even sharing offices, homes, or funding. (*Transformer* receives funding from an organization run by Alexander Berger, who appears on this list — and he in turn has ties to many of the other people cited.) The widespread societal impact of AI led us to include names from both private and public sectors, so you'll find founders and engineers as well as lawmakers and regulators. Most important, they still have everything to play for. The new power brokers will decide how it all shakes out, refashioning the world for the rest of us in the process.

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Logan Graham Stands Between Us and the Next Rogue AI Model

Head of the Frontier Red Team at Anthropic | Age: 32



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Paul Christiano Is One of the Few People Who Can Slow Down OpenAI From the Inside

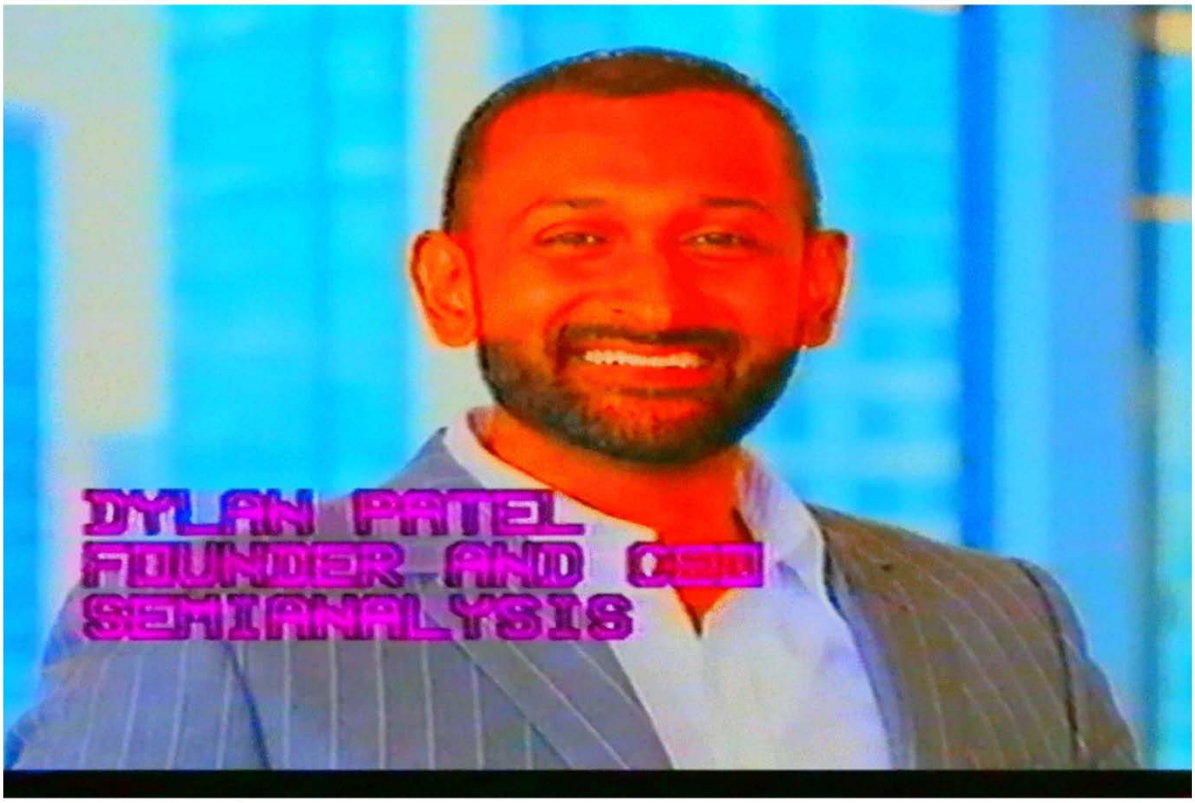
Founder of Alignment Research Center | Age: 37



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Dylan Patel's Analyses Can Spook Even Nvidia's CEO

Founder and CEO of SemiAnalysis | Age: 30



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Every Silicon Valley CEO Is Listening to Dwarkesh Patel

Host of 'Dwarkesh Podcast' | Age: 26



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Thibault Sottiaux Is Deciding How You, Your Boss, and Your Employee Use AI at Work

Head of core products at OpenAI | Age: 34



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Nat Friedman Put Meta Back in the AI Race

Head of product at Meta Superintelligence Labs | Age: 49



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Sarah Guo Might Pick the Next Baby Billionaire

Founder and partner of Conviction | Age: 37



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Karol Hausman and His Team Could Break AI's Physical-World Barrier

CEO of Physical Intelligence | Age: 38



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Beth Barnes Could Force the Industry's Secrets Into the Open

Founder and CEO of METR | Age: 29



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Brendan Foody Might Be the Reason Your Job Gets Automated

Co-founder of Mercor | Age: 23



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Dean Ball Is Nudging OpenAI to Embrace Regulation

Head of strategic futures at OpenAI | Age: 34



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Charles Porch Is OpenAI's Hollywood Whisperer

He is married to a billionaire's scion, friends with Gwyneth Paltrow and Anna Wintour, and tasked with getting celebrities (and everyone else) to not hate AI so much.



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Nathaniel Moran Is Pioneering a Republican-Friendly Position on AI Safety

Congressman | Age: 52



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Daniel Ziegler & Peter Lofgren Ushered in a Brand-new Donor Class

AI-safety researcher; member of technical staff, Anthropic | Ages: 31 and 37



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Sneha Revanur Is Writing AI Laws From the Outside

Founder of Encode | Age: 21



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Alex Bores Is Already Shaping Democrats' 2028 AI Agenda

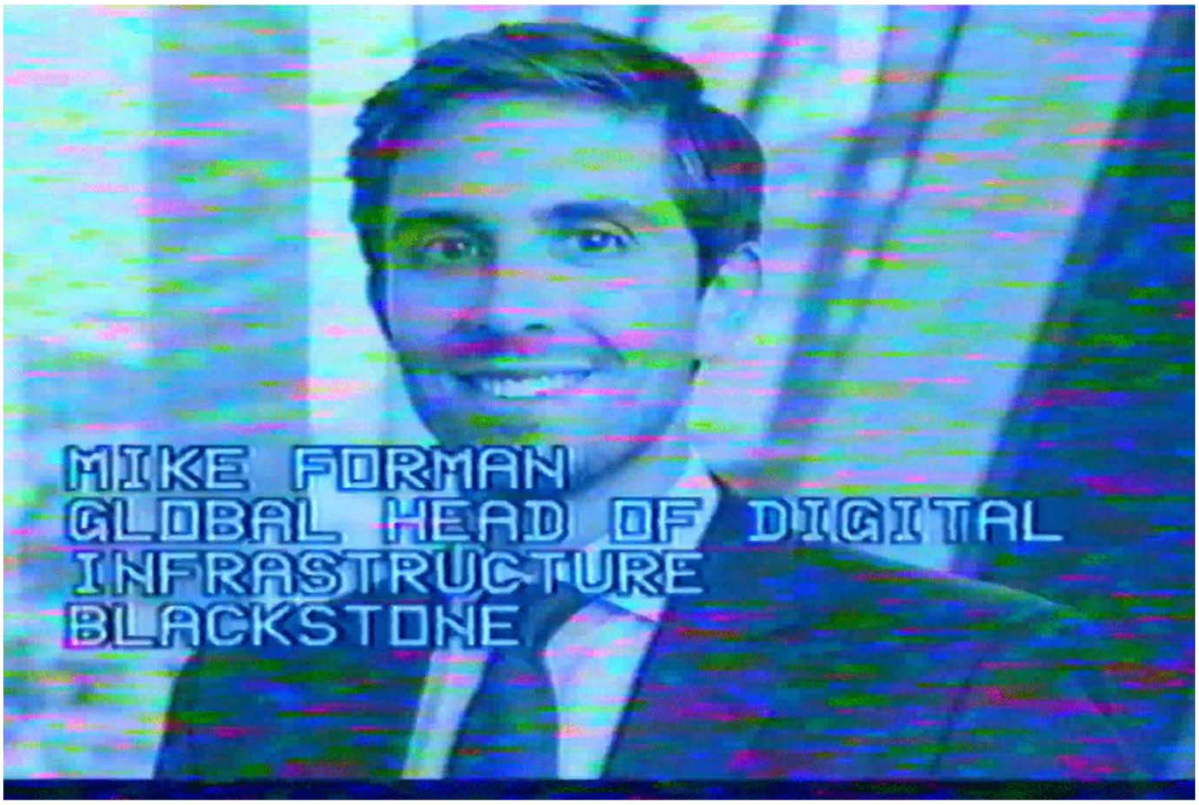
The defeated lawmaker has $30 million to keep presidential contenders focused on safety.



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Mike Forman Built a Data Center Empire

Global head of digital infrastructure for Blackstone Real Estate | Age: 36



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While Amy Kremer Is Stoking a Grassroots Conservative Backlash Against Them

Chair of Humans First | Age: 55



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The Competition Between the West and China Rests in Part on Misha Laskin

Co-founder of Reflection AI | Age: 35



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Alexander Berger Will Steer the Upcoming Flood of AI Money

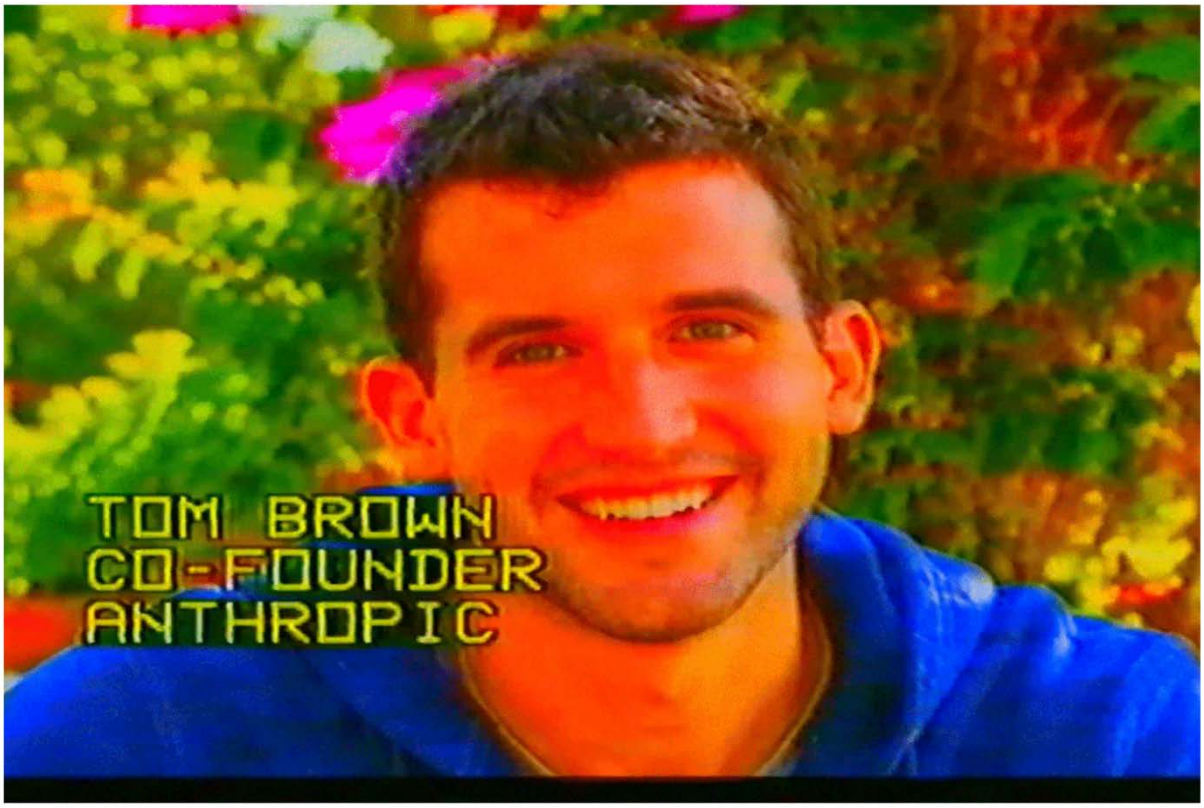
Co-founder and CEO of Coefficient Giving | Age: 36



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Tom Brown Is Tasked With Getting Anthropic on Trump's Good Side

Chief compute officer of Anthropic | Age: 39



The Editors, "So Few People, So Much Influence," *New York Magazine*, November 2, 2026.

But Tino Cuellar Is the Company's White-Shoe Adult in the Room

Chief global-affairs officer of Anthropic | Age: 54



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Investors Are Still Betting on Leopold Aschenbrenner — Even After His Hedge Fund Blew Up

Founder of Situational Awareness | Age: 24



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And Ali Behrouz Might Teach AI How to Teach Itself When Humans Aren't Watching

Staff research scientist at Google | Age: 29



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Ilya Sutskever Could Reach Superintelligence First

Founder of Safe Superintelligence Inc. | Age: 40



https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/most-powerful-people-in-ai-2026-list.html