

New Twitter CEO steps from behind the scenes to high profile

November 30 2021, by Barbara Ortutay



In this image provided by Twitter, Parag Agrawal poses for a picture. Newly named Twitter CEO Agrawal has emerged from behind the scenes to take over one of Silicon Valley's highest-profile and politically volatile jobs. Credit: Ellian Raffoul/Courtesy of Twitter via AP

Newly named Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal has emerged from behind the scenes to take over one of Silicon Valley's highest-profile and politically volatile jobs.

But his prior lack of name recognition coupled with a solid technical background appears to be what some big company backers were looking for to lead Twitter out of its current morass.

A 37-year-old immigrant from India, Agrawal comes from outside the ranks of celebrity CEOs, which include [the man he's replacing, Jack Dorsey](#), Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, and Elon Musk of SpaceX and Tesla. Those brand-name company founders and leaders have often been in the news—and on Twitter—for exploits beyond the day-to-day running of their companies.

Having served as Twitter's [chief technology officer](#) for the last four years, Agrawal's appointment was seen by Wall Street as a choice of someone who will focus on ushering Twitter into what's widely seen as the internet's next era—the metaverse.

Agrawal is a "'safe' pick who should be looked upon as favorably by investors," wrote CFRA Research analyst Angelo Zino, who noted that Twitter shareholder Elliott Management Corp. had pressured Dorsey to step down.

Elliott released a statement Monday saying Agrawal and new board chairman Bret Taylor were the "right leaders for Twitter at this pivotal moment for the company." Taylor is president and chief operating officer of the business software company Salesforce.

Agrawal, whose name is pronounced (PUH-rag AH-gur-wahl), joins a growing cadre of Indian-American CEOs of large tech companies, including Sundar Pichai of Google parent Alphabet, Microsoft's Satya

Nadella and IBM's Arvind Krishna.



The logo for Twitter appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Monday, Nov. 29, 2021. Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey will step down as CEO of the social media platform, the company announced. He will be succeeded by Twitter's current Chief Technology Officer Parag Agrawal. Credit: AP Photo/Richard Drew

He joined San Francisco-based Twitter in 2011, when it had just 1,000 employees, and has been its [chief technical officer](#) since 2017. At the end of last year, the company had a workforce of 5,500.

Agrawal previously worked at Microsoft, Yahoo and AT&T in research

roles. At Twitter, he's worked on machine learning, revenue and consumer engineering and helping with audience growth. He studied at Stanford and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

While Twitter has high-profile users like politicians and celebrities and is a favorite of journalists, its user base lags far behind old rivals like Facebook and YouTube and newer ones like TikTok. It has just over 200 million daily active users, a common industry metric.

As CEO, Agrawal have to step beyond the technical details and deal with the social and political issues Twitter and social media are struggling with. Those include misinformation, abuse and effects on mental health.

Agrawal got a fast introduction to life as CEO of a high-profile [company](#) that's one of the central platforms for political speech online.

Conservatives quickly unearthed a tweet he sent in 2010 that read "If they are not gonna make a distinction between muslims and extremists, then why should I distinguish between white people and racists."

As some Twitter users pointed out, the 11-year-old tweet was quoting a segment on "The Daily Show," which was referencing the firing of Juan Williams, who made a comment about being nervous about Muslims on an airplane.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a message for comment on the tweet.

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