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## Googling the Google Lobbyists

BY AUSTIN CARR Wed Jul 21, 2010



As we [told you earlier](#), Google has ramped up its lobbying efforts, spending \$1.34 million last quarter influencing the Washington elite--up 41% from the same period last year. Who are these lobbyists Google is using to pressure federal lawmakers and what are they trying to accomplish?

Here, we've Googled the Googlers for you, and found that the search giant is most concerned with influencing policy related to privacy and net neutrality.

**Alan Davidson.** Davidson is Google's director of public policy and government affairs and has written extensively on not just privacy but network neutrality, a hot-button issue that is [gaining steam](#) in Washington. It relates to search neutrality, which, as Google [has argued](#), would badly damage the search engine's ability to innovate. According to Marissa Mayer, VP of search product, Google would suffer significantly from government oversight in these areas.

**Johanna Shelton.** Shelton is Google's senior policy counsel, and had previously worked for Rep. Rich Boucher in the early aughts and as an attorney for the FCC. His connections to the FCC have obviously assisted Google's lobbying efforts toward net neutrality, especially as [many competitors](#) complain that the search engine's relationship has become too cozy with policy makers. But it's his ties to Boucher that are raising eyebrows. Just this week, Boucher [introduced](#) his additions to the online privacy bill, which is pointedly aimed at Google's advertising efforts. The legislation [has gained promise](#) among lawmakers. The draft of the bill released this week called on companies such as Google and Facebook to "explicitly" inform consumers of anything that would collect personal information, and give them the option to opt in or out.

**Rick Whitt.** Whitt serves as Google's telecom and media counsel in Washington, an important position going forth as the FCC involves itself with more Internet policy. Last year, when [Julius Genachowski](#) joined the FCC, Whitt said in an interview that the new chair showed promise. "I think Julius will come to this, [and] try to figure out what is the right regulatory framework for telecom policy," he [said](#). "I think he will also try to develop a framework around which people can rally about how the FCC can be a driver of innovation, rather than sometimes holding back such innovation."

**Seth Webb & Pablo Chavez.** It looks like Google is also drumming up Republican support in Washington. Chavez, Google's director of public policy, formerly worked under Sen. John McCain as chief counsel. Senior policy manager Seth Webb has [served](#) as a longtime Republican staffer in the House, where, according to Politico, he'll now be "enhancing the company's relationships

with congressional Republicans."

**Will DeVries.** DeVries recently joined Google as policy counsel and previously worked as an attorney with Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale & Dorr, the firm that helped bring Enron's wrongdoings to light and represented Guantanamo prisoners. Only yesterday, DeVries gave a briefing on Capitol Hill with the Cato Institute, aimed at building support for updating the Electronic Communications Privacy Act for the digital age.

"ECPA is difficult to explain to our users, and it's difficult for us to apply," DeVries [explained](#). "The confusion and the costs associated with it really for us is undermining the growth of our services and the growth of the cloud."

High costs and stunted growth? Not in Google's Washington.

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