

MEGAN SMITH

b. October 21, 1964

U.S. CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

“You have to iterate before you’re successful, you’re always learning with each step.”

She was the first female and first lesbian U.S. chief technology officer.

Megan Smith is an award-winning technology expert, entrepreneur and activist who served as the nation’s chief technology officer in the Obama administration. She is the first female and the first lesbian to hold the position.

Smith grew up in Buffalo, New York, and Fort Erie, Ontario. She spent several childhood summers at the Chautauqua Institution, a nonprofit educational resort. Her mother was the director of the Chautauqua Children’s School.

Smith earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She completed her thesis at the MIT

Media Lab and helped build a solar race car that competed in the first cross-continental solar car race.

Smith went on to work for General Magic in California, where she was the product design lead on emerging smartphone technologies, and at Apple in Tokyo. In 1995 she helped launch PlanetOut, an early leading LGBT website community, becoming its COO in 1996 and CEO in 1998. She was instrumental in forming partnerships between PlanetOut and AOL, Yahoo!, MSN and other industry innovators. Smith helped oversee PlanetOut’s successful merger with Gay.com, an LGBT dating and social media site.

In 2003 Smith joined Google, where she advanced to vice president of business development across the organization’s global partnership teams. She led important acquisitions of platforms such as Google Earth and Google Maps and created Google’s “Women Techmakers,” an initiative to promote women and diversity in the tech field.

Smith joined the Obama administration in 2017, becoming the third U.S. chief technology officer and assistant to the president. Smith and her team focused on leveraging policy and innovation to advance the technological capabilities of the White House.

After her White House tenure, Smith helped established Tech Jobs Tour to promote female and multicultural diversity in the American technology sector. In March 2018 she founded and became CEO of shift7, a company that uses technology to help tackle social, environmental and economic problems.

Smith serves on the boards of MIT, the MIT Media Lab, and Technology Review and is a member of the selection committee for the prestigious Carol L. Wilson Award at MIT. The World Economic Forum named her a Technology Pioneer in 2001 and 2002, and Out magazine named her among its 50 most powerful LGBT people in the USA in 2012 and 2013.

Smith and her longtime partner, Kara Swisher, a technology journalist, married in 2008 and divorced in 2018. They have two sons.



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