In the proxy, that Microsoft (MSFT) filed earlier this week, there was an interesting new disclosure about Microsoft’s political contributions:

Microsoft recognizes the increasing interest of U.S. public company shareholders in establishing greater transparency of corporate political contributions. Microsoft discloses its political contributions to support candidates and ballot measures. Microsoft has also adopted principles for dues payments or contributions to trade associations or other tax-exempt organizations that engage in political activity, and if available the amount of these contributions used for political activity.

It takes you to this page where you can download four different PDF files: one for statewide candidates, another for committee contributions, and the last for corporate contributions. We’ve taken a quick skim of the federal PAC committee contributions and it shows that MSPAC to Democrats and Republicans, giving $15K each to both parties’ Senate and Congressional races. We’re quite sure there’s other interesting details in the four documents too.

What Microsoft is doing this voluntarily, which in our book, at least, deserves a gold star.
A daily look at things buried in SEC filings

• Employment contracts

• Unusual perks

• M&A oddities
How can XBRL help?

• Finding things in the filings is a combination of computer-assisted searching and human logic
• Numbers only tell part of the story -- key is in the footnotes
• Challenge to make more more of these footnotes and other text in filings machine readable