

## Facebook and Privacy

Of course there is the overall hype for social platforms. The popularity of them is tremendous. Are we dealing with a lack of conventional communication? Is it the convenience of the liberal 'call and response' timing in conversation? The social component is definitely a main aspect in its popularity.

For those who have not already done so, here is why I would encourage not to register with Facebook (and alike services) - (at least not with 'real data!')

In order to get a deeper look into the procedures, I created a temporary account with no 'real' data. It was quiet sensational how much private data this organisation collects. They ask how I'm linked to people, how I got to know them and so forth. (not to speak of address, credit card details and many other personal information, that would be asked at times)

### What is the intention behind asking for all that private data?

Nothing really obvious is happening after the registration, concerning your privacy. You simply get tricked in answering as many questions as possible. But the dangers lie in the long run value of the collected data.

Mark Zuckerman (founder of Facebook ) is going to raise the value of his huge database with the increment of members and their data.

Information is valuable and I assume this value shifts more and more on individuals (human resources!). We are aware of corporations making good use of 'private' Facebook entries when hiring. It seems a fact, that the US-Secret Service CIA is recruiting agents from the platform as well.

(<http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2007/01/72545> )

To process and harvest of information on 'social' networks it just needs to have the right personality pattern to look for. It's not difficult to find the right match. But do we have to make it that simple to this potential exploitation?

There are many issues, to be faced from which "identity theft" and "social engineering" may only be some of them.

### Long term effects

Imagine (for whatever reason) one desperately wants to have detailed information on, lets say, 'John Doe'. An easy way to do so is to simply do a Google search.

Facebook then is offering a more detailed view. Provided the John Doe's Profile is accessible to Facebook members (which is usually the case) you find his leisure interests, music, films and other interesting information. A displayed picture would give a good idea. John Doe's social network is visible to those who care. Does he hang out with people with uncommon haircuts, unpopular ideas, strange political views? One does really not have to be a trained Psychologist to draw a personality profile for John Doe.

### Facebook and privacy - Sharing Your Information with Third Parties (Facebook Principles)

Yes Facebook is somewhat honest. It's directly 'in your face' with the statements in their privacy policy saying that they 'do share' your information with the very poor effort to hide this behind lose verbiage.

How vague are the following statements?

Quote:

We share your information with third parties only in limited circumstances where we believe such sharing is 1) reasonably necessary to offer the service, 2) legally required or 3) permitted by you. (...)

(...) We may provide information to service providers to help us bring you the services we offer. Specifically, we may use third parties to facilitate our business, such as to host the service at a co-location facility for servers, to send out email updates about Facebook, to remove repetitive information from our user lists, to process payments for products or services, to offer an online job application process, or to provide search results or links (including sponsored links). In connection with these offerings and business operations, our service providers may have access to your personal information for use for a limited time in connection with these business activities. Where we utilise third parties for the processing of any personal information, we implement reasonable contractual and technical protections limiting the use of that information to the Facebook-specified purposes. (...)

(Source: <http://www.facebook.com/policy.php>)

## Purchase behaviour

One evident third party issue with Facebook is the monitoring of purchase behaviour. Facebook accomplishes this by the use of tracking cookies (Facebook Beacon). Over 40 Companies (Sony, STA Travel, Fandago, TripAdvisor, etc.) are working with the system. The Fandango Theater and Movie Database for instance delivers a cookie to Facebook which then gives a better chance to place user focused Ads on the Facebook website and furthermore collects certain behaviour schemes on the User. Facebooks internal use and sharing with other 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations is questionable.

## Thoughts

There are many scenarios in which Facebook data (and alike) can be exploited. Nowadays widely used in Human Resources, to place products in adds and many others.

Social mobbing would be amongst the utmost negative causes but imaginable as well. We are not aware and we can't yet estimate the aftermath of a careless give-away of private data 'in the wild'. Data once given to 'the system' is there to stay for the non-transparent copy and data-harvest mechanisms. In general there is no real chance to erase the data, which could potentially multiply in all hazy directions and end up in other databases.

The moment when Data Collecting (other then through the 'officially existing' institutionalised Organisation) becomes a specific business is worrying, be it legal or illegal at the time. This business would already have a market in certain fields when specially skilled workforce is needed. Many people are more then happy to share their 'professional' data anyway (xing). Its simply a tiny step to get an extensive personality profile of many people out there. But what would be the consequence for the minority of people who did not display any private data...?

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## Links:

<http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2007/11/15/facebook-changes-the-norms-for-web-purchasing-and-privacy/>

Facebook best practice:  
<http://www.sophos.com/security/best-practice/facebook.html>

Interesting statement on facebook  
[http://www.wired.com/techbiz/media/news/2007/07/facebook\\_changes](http://www.wired.com/techbiz/media/news/2007/07/facebook_changes)  
(Unfortunately not working at the mo.:)  
<http://www.prisonplanet.com/articles/june2005/090605thefacebook.htm>