

Companies Are Not Going to Stop Collecting Your Data — Here’s Why



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2019 is barely two months old and we’ve already seen enough data privacy violations to last us for the rest of the year. The last week of January alone started ironically enough with Data Privacy Day and was followed by one major privacy breach after another.

The list is jarring:

- [Apple’s FaceTime bug](#)
- [Facebook and their spying VPN](#)
- [The 2.2 billion hacker megaleak](#)
- [Facebook spying on their users’ private messages](#)
- [The Airbus data breach](#)

Did I mention this was only in the last week of January?

Instead of getting better our privacy online is only getting worse. The frequency of these events has made it so we all know how it’s going to play out. The response has become so routine that it’s downright predictable

Every time one of these stories breaks the company in question comes out repentant, they trudge out a CEO or other high-level exec who puts on a super-sad face like their puppy just died, they purse their lips, put their head down, and proceed to swear up and down that they had the best intentions and this won’t ever happen again on their watch. If they could add tears for added effect they would absolutely do it.

But it’s all a lie.

Mr. Penitent CEO has absolutely no intention of changing the status quo in any way whatsoever. You don’t kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, and your data is absolutely golden eggs to these companies.

Just take one look at Facebook, seen twice in my list of recent breaches above, as the best example of why you still need to worry about your data online.

Contrary to what you think Facebook has had a great year

On the surface you’d think Facebook was limping along. Coming off last year they had the [Cambridge Analytica scandal](#), the [testimony in front of Congress](#), the [major data breach](#), and revelations of the [Russian involvement in the US elections](#). The backlash even started a whole “[Quit Facebook](#)” [movement](#) online.

And this was all before the two scandals they’ve had this year alone. Even Apple apparently thought Facebook’s privacy practices [required action against them](#).

But if you think any of these scandals can hold back a company like Facebook you’re dead wrong. Facebook is stronger than ever.

Not even two days after these latest developments went down Facebook released its latest earnings report. Fans of data privacy might want to look away because [the numbers aren’t helpful to the cause](#):

“Facebook profits were up 61% for the quarter ending 31 December 2018 to \$6.88 billion and up 39% for the year to \$22.1 billion, with revenues of \$16.9 billion (up 30%) and \$55.8 billion (up 37%) respectively. Advertising revenue for the quarter was up 30% to \$16.9 billion and up 38% for the year to \$39.9 billion.”

With numbers like that we should just be happy Facebook isn’t physically putting cameras in our houses to spy on us. There’s no two ways about this, Facebook is making a killing off of your data. So, yes, of course they’re going to continue the course. They’ll say all the right things in public about caring about your privacy, but behind the scenes they’re doing a happy dance.



And it’s not just Facebook that you need to worry about. Nearly every online company has questionable data privacy practices, from Google to Amazon to Apple to Yahoo and Microsoft. In other words, [the “Stacks”](#) — those huge centralized online behemoths you can’t escape.

No punishment means no incentive to stop

At the heart of the matter is the fact that when it comes to choosing convenience over privacy, most consumers choose convenience.

Facebook makes it easy to connect with people. Amazon makes it easy to shop for products. Google makes it easy to search for anything. Convenience convenience convenience. And who cares about giving up privacy when things are handed to you on a platter right?

Unfortunately whether you believe this to be true or not, the market numbers lead these companies to believe this as fact. When you boil it down the bottom line is the only thing that matters to anyone. And the bottom line is looking VERY healthy right now.

The Stacks don’t have to worry about protecting your privacy because the numbers tell them it doesn’t really matter. Even the aforementioned Quit Facebook movement didn’t really move the needle at all. For a company with nearly 2 billion users, a couple million quitting the platform is a drop in the bucket. There are more where they came from.

As further proof of what companies really think about this issue is the [internal Facebook memo](#) that was leaked. In it a Facebook VP goes on to defend their practice of recruiting users to install a VPN so Facebook can monitor all the activity on the phones. This doesn’t jibe with what Mr. Penitent CEO said to us though.

It’s all a farce and, unfortunately, we are playing the biggest role.

We enable these Stacks to get away with data privacy murder when we don’t offer a conviction. If a criminal gets away with a crime, they’ll just keep doing the crime until they get punished. Likewise these companies will continue to play loose with your privacy as long as the masses allow them to.

You can only control yourself

The Stacks don’t care about data privacy and, if we’re being honest, [most people don’t either](#). The last year and the first month of this year have made this assumption crystal clear. Data breaches come and go, the news cycle ensures it doesn’t stay in the public consciousness long, and online companies keep reaping revenue and users.

If you’re expecting a massive wave of change, similar to what happened in Europe with [the GDPR](#), you will likely be very disappointed. If we ever get to that level globally it will still take a long while.

In the short term we can expect the status quo to continue. These companies are not going to change and we shouldn’t delude ourselves to believe that they will. So our only option is to protect our privacy on an individual level.

Unless we’re certain a company is truly respecting our privacy we should assume they are not and conduct our business accordingly, either by limiting our usage of their services or outright eliminating them from our lives.

The more you use them, the more you tell them, the more data they will be collecting on you. It shouldn’t have to be that way but it is. So don’t use them, don’t tell them anything about you, and cut them off where it hurts.

Who knows, if enough people do this, it might eventually hurt their bottom line and cause Mr. Penitent CEO to cry some real tears for once.

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