The Companies You Can Trust With Your Data, And The Ones You Shouldn't

AXEL Follow
Sep 27, 2017 · 5 min read

We all value loyalty. We all want to surround ourselves with people that have our backs.

However, as the world becomes more and more digital, there is an alarming trend where our loyalty is being compromised. The online companies that we put our faith in are showing themselves to not be worthy of our trust.

Most will say all the right things that give off the appearance of being trustworthy. However, as we've uncovered many times already, these companies don't necessarily have our backs when it comes to the issue of data privacy.

Many companies are too willing and eager to compromise your data at the drop of a hat. It's becoming increasingly challenging to figure out which companies actually care and which ones just act the part.

But that distinction can be the difference between your private files staying private or ending up in the wrong hands.

You're okay with the government having your data, right?

While it might be frustrating to have your data compromised for the purposes of being used to advertise to you, it's a relatively benign issue. A greater concern to many people is when your data is being accessed by the government.

It's not a secret that governments often solicit user data from companies. The practice is so common that it's practically become an acceptable part of life. But it shouldn't have to be that way.

In some cases, yes, the government needs to access data. However, not all data that is being accessed by the government is necessary. For instance in 2016 the US government sent nearly 50,000 requests for user data from Facebook alone.

So yes, the issue of governments wanting user data is real. Unfortunately some companies are just too willing to give up data without much of a fight.

As we've said many times, awareness is one of the most important weapons in the battle for data privacy. The more you know the better prepared you can be. It's important to be aware of which companies are willing to protect your data more than others.

To that end, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) recently published a report of which companies protect you when it comes to government data requests. They use five different criteria on which they judge companies on how easily they give up your data.

All the major online companies are included in the chart. The findings present a fascinating insight into which companies take privacy seriously and which don't.

Unfortunately many companies are not reciprocating the loyalty you show to them.

Who can you trust?

It may not be a shocking result, but mobile companies are the worst when it comes to protecting data. Verizon, T-Mobile, and AT&T were all in the bottom of the list, with only one star each. Just as unsurprising is seeing Comcast all the way at the bottom with the mobile companies.

What might legitimately be shocking is how low Amazon is on the list, coming just above the four companies we just mentioned. Suddenly one might pause before using Amazon for their purchases.

The news is also bad for those of you that like to use messenger services. WhatsApp came in at an embarrassing two stars. Considering how much data they have through their chats, that's an alarming result.

On the other side of the scale, the good news is that many companies went a perfect 5-for-5. Adobe, Lyft, Pinterest, and Uber are among some of the companies that can take pride in protecting your data.

Social media companies were a mixed bag. Other than Pinterest no one was perfect. Facebook and LinkedIn had four stars, while Twitter, Tumblr, and Snapchat had only three stars.

Other notables include the major software companies; Apple, Microsoft, and Google all came in at a decent four stars. It bears watching if any of these companies make any improvements in the near future.

It's a shame that a list like this has to be created in the first place but that's the world we live in. Companies need to be held in check for breaching the trust of their users.

Loyalty needs to be a two-way street. We give these companies our data and hard earned dollars, so there should be no issues over where their loyalties should lie. As you can see, for many companies, their loyalties aren't to you.

Making the list, checking it twice

The EFF should be applauded for their report. This list should be a benchmark that users hold towards every online company they interact with. Companies should be looking at that list and doing everything in their power to be perfect.

Of course, that would only be likely if there was enough public pressure to do so. If companies were being vilified and losing users because of how poorly they protect user data then we will see some tangible changes.

There needs to be a substantial cost to companies not being loyal to their users or they will not make any effort to improve.

As we see from the EFF list, many companies are doing a good job in this area. We know it's possible to offer services while protecting our data. It should be a source of competition for which companies will do a better job of protecting our data.

Lists like this one hold companies accountable so they aren't allowed to get away with unscrupulous behavior. It's up to the rest of us to make sure these lists hold value in how companies operate.

We should never hesitate to call out companies for falling short when it comes to our data. Our loyalty to them must be tied to their loyalty to us. We need to know they are on our side in the war for our data.

If they fail and take our loyalty for granted then the only choice is to cut them out of our lives and reward the companies that show they actually care about us.

Liked what you just read?

Do you share our vision of making life easier for people WITHOUT compromising their privacy?

→ Click the 👏 below to **CLAP** for this piece.

→ **SHARE** our story with people you think will benefit from it.

→ Get the latest updates — **FOLLOW** our blog, Reddit, Facebook, or Twitter.

We're working hard to bring you great content. If you have something you want us to write about, let us know in the comments below!

Written by: Vsem Yenovkian

Privacy Cybersecurity Cybercrime Data Data Protection

WRITTEN BY
AXEL
We're AXEL, asking the hard questions on who's doing what with YOUR data. www.axel.org
Follow