

Facebook Loses Face Over Self-Serving Privacy Policy

By *HEATHER HORN* on January 12, 2010 4:54pm

Do people even want privacy any more? Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg doesn't think so. In an [interview](#) with Michael Arrington, the young entrepreneur discusses Facebook's controversial December decision to make users' information publicly searchable, and suggests Facebook is just responding to changing social norms. Even Internet addicts object to Zuckerberg's argument, which they argue is more than a little self-serving.

- **180 on Privacy, Reasoning Disingenuous** Marshall Kirkpatrick at ReadWriteWeb is furious, devoting two long posts to the subject. In the [first](#), he points out that "this is a radical change from the way that Zuckerberg pounded on the importance of user privacy for years," and argues that Facebook is not, in fact, responding to social change but rather "itself is a major agent of social change"--Zuckerberg is being "arrogant and condescending" by suggesting otherwise. In the [second](#), he further develops an idea from his first post, that that privacy is in fact crucial for Facebook, which is essentially about "allow[ing] everyday people to share the minutiae of their daily lives with trusted friends and family." Though allowing that privacy has changed in recent years, he cites a "draft thesis paper" arguing that privacy isn't just about secrecy, but rather about information being shared within certain contexts. Making profile information searchable, he contends, has removed the context.
- **But Zuckerberg's Right--Millennials Don't Want Privacy** [True Slant's](#) Kashmir Hill points to a "recent Pew survey" showing younger generations care less about privacy.
- **Millennial Here: Yes I Do** The Atlantic's [Derek Thompson](#) objects to Zuckerberg using the rise of blogging as an evidence of the decreased interest in privacy: "The fact that blogging has taken off in the last five or six years," counters Thompson, is, rather, "evidence that people like publicly sharing their thoughts about food and politics and Jersey Shore." Furthermore, he argues, "It's cheeky of Zuckerberg to highlight Facebook's talent to 'reflect...social norms' when every Facebook privacy update is met with something approximating funereal wailing." Comparing Facebook to "a Middle Eastern country sitting on top of an ocean of oil," Thompson acknowledges the "business-driven pressure" to "drill deep into their reserves, so they can shove Coldplay tickets in front of Coldplay fans and job listings in front of college seniors, and so forth." But Zuckerberg shouldn't pretend that business incentives are actually about user comfort, he concludes.
- **Privacy Really Is Dead, So 'Chill Out,'** orders TechCrunch's [Michael Arrington](#), the original Zuckerberg interviewer. People had problems once upon a time with the idea of telephone companies listening in on calls, or Google spying on Gmail, but "the benefits of those products far outweigh the costs," he says, and the same is true for Facebook--which is why we still use it and will continue using it. Privacy really is "dead," he continues, pointing to a startlingly popular site "that lets users publish everything they buy with their credit cards." Facebook is simply doing "what's best for Facebook," but the idea that it's reacting to trends isn't wholly wrong.

- **Privacy Is Not Dead: Meet the New Privacy** Cato's [Julian Sanchez](#) has a particularly original contribution: though a Google search of someone's name turns up plenty of information, it's "significant that the crucial first page of results is likely to consist of information that the individuals themselves have chosen to make public: Blogs, Facebook or MySpace profiles, Twitter accounts, Last.fm pages, YouTube channels." Searching for information on someone "a generation ago surely would have been much more laborious and less fruitful, but it also would have consisted to a far greater extent of what *others* had to say about the target: gossip first and foremost, but perhaps also press mentions, official records, and so on." That information is now "pushed to the margin by what we've chosen to disclose."

The Debate

No Privacy, Please [Julian Sanchez](#), Cato Institute

Zuckerberg's Right [Kashmir Hill](#), True Slant

Facebook's Zuckerberg [Marshall Kirkpatrick](#), ReadWriteWeb

Why Facebook Is Wrong [Marshall Kirkpatrick](#), ReadWriteWeb

Facebook Does Not Understand [Derek Thompson](#), The Atlantic

Ok You Luddites [Michael Arrington](#), TechCrunch

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