

From the desk of.....

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Federal Trade Commission
Office of the Secretary
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Suite CC-5610 (Annex C)
Washington, DC 20580

Re: Competition and Consumer Protection in the 21st Century Hearing, Project Number P181201

The Federal Trade Commission should take steps to keep media companies like Google and Facebook from selling our personal data without our express permission. It used to be that big businesses were not allowed to get so big that they took control of everything, including the government. There were more restrictions keeping such companies from getting too big for their britches! There should be restrictions that protect our privacy. There should have been such restrictions before all the current problems happened. This has gone on for too long.

Google is its own entity. This is the problem with the internet. The government has not kept up with the internet. It is the new media and this media controls what's out there and manipulates what people are thinking. It really upsets me how they collect my data and share or sell it. I get targeted with ads and other solicitations because all these companies then think they know me. I don't want any of my personal information shared with anyone.

I do read the terms I must agree to before using sites like Google or Facebook or my phone. They may say they are taking the data for reasons like making our shopping experience better or so they know what we like. But this is misleading. It is not made plain or clear enough that what they are really saying is, "We can sell your data to other people who can then target you." Younger people especially often click on "I Accept," and just move on. They don't realize how much they are giving up by doing this; they are giving away the store. I think everyone should have to specify exactly what can and cannot be shared. If you are forced to go through this process, it makes the person who is going to use that "free" app really clear about what they are giving up.

The data that is being shared is not being kept secure. That is clear from the Equifax and Facebook data breach scandals. That's just the beginning. If you do your taxes online you can get hit by hackers. They come at you from all sides--even places like Home Depot and Target. I watch very carefully to see if someone is using my information or taking out a credit card or getting a loan in my name. We even got in trouble paying our cable bill online with a credit card. They stole our card information right then and there. It was a real hassle to get it straightened out.

Then there is the fact that Google's Android phones have been tracking their users for years. They might as well just put a chip in your face or your hand so they can follow you. That's about what it is coming down to. They have to know what we are doing every minute of every day. It is worse than Big Brother. We are just products to them. It is wrong that Google is so powerful that they can do what they want. They are being allowed to pull all the strings.

I get very worked up about all of this, but everybody should be really worked up about this. I want you to know that media giants like Google and Facebook should not have all of the power that they do. There needs to be more competition; there need to be more Googles and more Amazons, not just one of each. I am looking to the FTC to do something about this, and to do it now.

Regards,

Brenda Hartnett