

L11: What do Companies Know About You?

1. What kinds of information about yourself are you giving away when you use apps like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat?

When someone uses apps like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, they are allowing others to access a significant amount of personal information about themselves. Information available includes names, email addresses, phone numbers, home addresses, date of birth, age, marital status, maiden name, pet names, childhood friends, high schools attended, colleges attended, names of current and passed employers, occupations, parent's names, sibling's names, names of children, nationality, favorite vacation spots, hobbies, favorite sports teams, favorite movies, favorite music, favorite books and much more.

2. What information did you find in the Personal Information and Privacy section on Google?

While viewing the Personal Information section on Google, I was able to find my name, birthday, gender, email address, the date my password was last updated and my preferred language. While viewing my privacy settings, I was able to see basically every website that I visited and the date and time that I viewed the site. I viewed the history as far back as 45 days, but the list went on and on.

3. Did you find any information about yourself when you googled your name? Do you have a common name that gives you lots of results or an uncommon one that nets you fewer?

When I Googled my name, I did not find anything in the top results related to myself at first. There is a famous painter and writer with the same name as me, so all of the results were about him. When I Googled my name together with the city and state where I currently live, I was able to find my twitter account, my YouTube account, my current and past addresses, and my age all in the top results.

4. What two sites did you try? Did you find any additional information about yourself? Was it correct? Is there a way to have the entry removed from the site?

The two sites that I tried were zabasearch.com and spokeo.com. Zabasearch.com provided my full name, current address, phone number, and age. Everything on zabasearch.com was correct except for my age which was off by one year. There was a link at the bottom of the page to “suppress my data” however the data available to be suppressed was limited. Spokeo.com provided my full name, current and passed places where I have lived, names of a few relatives and my age. Spokeo.com also claimed to have more information including my phone numbers, addresses, social media, email addresses, wealth, and employment history, however that information was not provided for free. Everything that I saw seemed to be accurate on spokeo.com. Spokeo.com provided an “Opt Out” form for those who wanted to remove their listing from the site.