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IST-10

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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?

*You’re giving away your likeness, your name, age, location, place of work, hobbies, interests, places you’ve been (think vacations, concerts, etc). Furthermore, as the years go by, you are giving away how all these things have progressed with time for you. Also, depending on what you share, you could be giving away photos of loved ones, political opinions, PHI, etc.*

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

*YouTube history, web activity, and timeline, dating back several years. I did get recommendations to auto delete this data in 3, 18, and 36 month intervals. It’s nice to know that this data can be deleted, but this is not something that is widely known or advertised, so we’ll have people looking at their YouTube history from 2015 in 50 years*.

1. 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?

*I found my name, current and previous addresses, personal AND work emails, work history, relatives names, past and present phone numbers, and schooling information. I have an uncommon name, especially for a place like Pittsburgh, so if you know the full name, it would be hard to mix me up. Though many people misspell my name as ‘Gene’ so if you don’t know the correct spelling, or don’t know my last name, I may disappear into the sea of anonymity, so to speak. If I lived in a larger international destination area like NYC, La, or South Florida, it may take a little longer to find me, and you’ll find more people with Haitian and French names.*

1. 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?

*I tried spokeo and zabasearch for information. The information was correct, which means somebody can find me (and most people) if they want. As for additional information, I did find the address of my family’s apartment when I was a small child. I was even able to find it on google maps. The area is completely gentrified now. It’s a testament to how vast the data collection arms of these companies are, and how information that we may think is lost to time is not last at all, just hoarded by spokeo. There was an option to opt out for both sites, though spokeo made that much easier to find than zabasearch. It’s worth noting that the harder you make it to opt out, the more likely people are to Not opt out, which allows zabasearch and pothers to retain all this data and keep selling it. Almost like a free trial that ends, but you forget about it, and pay for an unused subscription for 3 years. Except in this case, YOU are the product.*