



Online Privacy Considerations (And Outrages) for Lawyers to Ponder

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When I discuss my privacy concerns with people, frequently the response I get is "If you're not doing anything wrong, why do you care?"

I'll tell ya why I care. Just because something's private doesn't mean it's bad or sinister. Example: When I take a shower in the morning, that's private. I don't want anyone else seeing that. The love two people share is a private matter. My innermost thoughts, hopes, fears, and ambitions, I only share those with those closest to me. Not for the world.

And legal professionals, more than most, should be attuned to online privacy concerns due to their sensitivity to attorney client privilege. Which is why, as someone who runs an [online legal practice management company](#), I seethe, stew, and simmer when I see egregious violations of someone's online privacy.



CUT TO: Today. This just in: two recent privacy concerns that should grab your attention. First is a headline in the [New York Times that the federal government wants better hooks into private companies' telecom technology for better snooping](#). The piece from today, October 18th, states under the big banner headline "U.S. Pushes to Ease Technical Obstacles to Wiretapping":

"The disclosure that the administration is seeking ways to increase pressure on carriers already

subject to the 1994 law comes less than a month after The New York Times reported on a related effort: a plan to bring Internet companies that enable communications — like Gmail, Facebook, BlackBerry and Skype — under the law's mandates for the first time, a



demand that would require major changes to some services' technical designs and business models."

Then there was the [recent disclosure in the Wall Street Journal](#) that app creators for Facebook, notably the people who create FarmVille, are sharing your personal information harvested from the social media site. **Apparently, users willingly accept the wholesale collection of their personal Facebook information in return for the almost irresistible allure of growing virtual carrots.** These companies, in violation of Facebook code, were sharing user identifiers with other companies.

Remember, it's Facebook's profile on you, not your profile on Facebook. Do you really want random companies knowing who you associate with?

More data can be pieced together with Facebook info than you realize. In fact, MIT computer scientists were able to predict which Facebook users were gay, even though they hadn't revealed that information on their site. Read about ['Project Gaydar'](#).

NOT COOL.

You as the consumer **MUST** be aware of the equitable exchange of information: what are you willing to give up in order to get what you want? Your privacy is more precious than you may or may not realize. Take steps to defend it, and understand who you're getting in bed when you conduct business online. **[RM]**

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