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What does #DeleteFacebook have to do with Ad Blocking?
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Study after study has shown that US consumers value convenience and personalization over privacy, but we may be at a pivot point. The news last week about Cambridge Analytica's access to the personal data of Facebook's users, and their networks of friends and family, is pushing the focus for a ridiculously huge audience of 2.2 billion monthly active users to think about the real value of their personal data. This is bigger than the Equifax breach in 2017, and that was huge, 145.5 million people affected.

So what's the connection with ad blocking? Control. People download ad blockers to exercise control over their web experience and privacy. Using apps like AdBlock Plus is one of the few ways that users have some control over the use of their data. Ad block usage has increased steadily over the past 4 years and it is still increasing steadily on mobile in the US and worldwide. At last count, emarketer estimated that there are 75.1 million people in the US using ad blockers. This news has given many of Facebook's 230 million active users in the US reason to pause, thumbs hovering over the keys, and think.

Unlike Equifax, the Cambridge Analytica data issue, isn't a breach. Sharing data with app developers is foundational to Facebook's operating guidelines and many other social platforms and media sites. It's how they work with app developers and it has been for ten+ years. Any Facebook app developer could have had the same access to the same data that Cambridge had. The issue isn't about the poor decision to trust Cambridge as Zuckerberg apologized for. It's about the way data is collected, shared and monetized into $463.03 billion companies (and falling), like Facebook. See Will Oremus' article on Slate.

Here's how it's done. The Facebook Graph API gives application developers the ability to download to their own servers information not only about the person using their application, but information about their friends as well. One way to do this is with the *All Mutual Friends API call.* As the API documentation says, the All Mutual Friends API:

"Returns a list of all the Facebook friends that the session user and the request user

Once the application developer gets this data, they simply store this on their own servers, repeat the process for as many other users as possible, and then merge the results on their own. Nothing other than terms of service prevents people from selling this data to the highest bidder.

This Facebook ruh-roh moment is really just another incident in a long line of privacy issues in recent years, but this one affects such a large audience that it may move the consumer "I care about privacy" dial significantly. The more users learn that they are trading personal data for free services, the more they will understand that, yes nothing is free, but much more, that their personal data is valuable, and it's being sold for someone else's advertising profit, not just for the services that they enjoy. The sweeping GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) legislation set to begin May 25, 2018 in Europe, could be the harbinger of new legislation here in the US, but first people need to care enough to demand it. In the meantime, many are joining the #DeleteFacebook movement with Elon Musk et all, and some will be searching for apps like ad blockers to help them take back some control right now.

What can social platforms and media sites do now that they are caught the wake of this widespread news and possible fall out? Be transparent about their business model, and see consent not as a checkbox, but as a "micro-moment"", when you can really connect with your customer. By integrating a messaging platform that turns the micro-moment of consent into an open invitation to connect, social platforms, media sites and apps can bring more transparency to their intentions and put more value on the services that come from the data sharing. That's not just tweaking the UX. It's about changing the mindset and seeing your customer's personal data as a privilege that's given (and soon exchanged), for your valuable content and services. It's about respecting the user and starting off on the right foot to a stronger, more genuine connection that can turn into the very thing every brand wanted in the first place: loyalty.