

Your privacy is our responsibility



Consumer privacy is under siege. But it doesn't have to be. Somehow, individual privacy has become subordinate to business practice. When the infringement of their privacy makes business models more lucrative, consumers clearly lose.

Online advertising and consumer privacy are naturally at loggerheads. The logic is uncomplicated. A business built on online advertising is successful only when it uncovers consumer information. It actually thrives when it exploits it because advertisers pay a lot more to target consumers with specific traits and interests.

And how is all this information collected? Through surreptitious software—riding on the deception of free products—that relentlessly monitors your actions, clicks, and conversations with the primary motive of uncovering your personal habits and interests. This data is used to drop you into a “marketable and actionable segment” that is packaged and sold to advertisers. But what makes for good segmentation for advertisers faithfully translates to invasion of privacy for you and me.

Let's be clear. Software does get better when it can observe its user, thereby doing something smarter for the user within a given context. Spell checkers work this way. Their sole intention is to uncover your errors and offer you the chance to correct them. The implicit contract with the user is that all user information is restricted for this explicit purpose. This allows users to trust their spell checkers. But this trust cannot hold when there are powerful business incentives to channel user information into consumer characterizations, then sold to the highest bidder.

However this might be spun, make no mistake: it becomes a flagrant invasion of your privacy.

Things get much worse when perpetrators turn out to be monopolies who can readily translate their dominance of the product market into their monopoly over your private information.

Zoho Perspectives: An inside look at the values that drive us.

Zoho Perspectives gives you an inside look at the values and principles that have brought us success.

<https://www.zoho.com/perspectives>

So it should come as no surprise that governments are often forced to step in to protect consumer privacy and fine the transgressors. In 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) goes into effect in the EU. This will require companies to seek explicit permission from users before serving them ads, among other restrictions. In a recent broadside on monopolistic competition, the EU imposed a record €2.4 trillion antitrust fine.

We're proud to say that at Zoho, we "opted-out" of the advertising model long before any government had to tell us it was ethically dubious.

Now you may know that Zoho offers free versions of many of our products, that also have paid versions. But we have never served ads. And never will. The only way we make money is from the software license fees you pay us. So you never have to wonder if we're tracking your behavior to feed the ad monster. Offering free versions is simply a way for you to try our products—well-featured, and bereft of fine-print or subliminal intent—until you're ready and happy to pay us.

We're confident that you will. And here's why: we offer incredible software at an impossible price, that will never compromise your privacy.