

Fugitivus

Runaway Slave | Harriet J

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Fuck you, Google

2010 FEBRUARY 11

by Harriet J

tags: fuck google buzz, fuck you google, google buzz, google buzz sucks

I use my private Gmail account to email my boyfriend and my mother.

There's a BIG drop-off between them and my other "most frequent" contacts.

You know who my third most frequent contact is?

My abusive ex-husband.

Which is why it's SO EXCITING, Google, that you AUTOMATICALLY allowed all my most frequent contacts access to my Reader, including all the comments I've made on Reader items, usually shared with my boyfriend, who I had NO REASON to hide my current location or workplace from, and never did.

My other most frequent contacts? Other friends of Flint's.

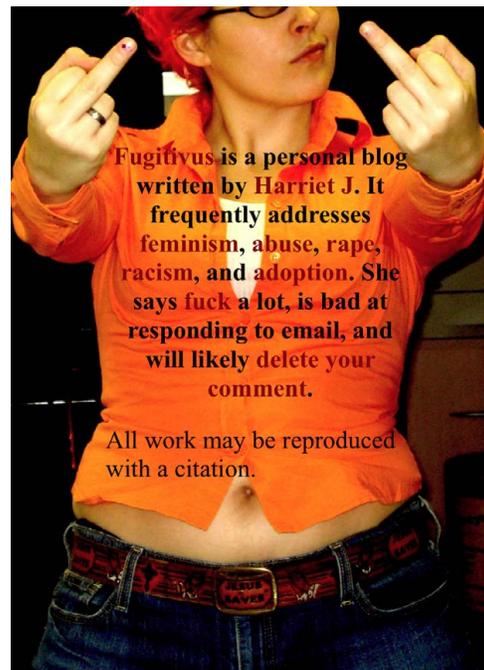
Oh, also, people who email my ANONYMOUS blog account, which gets forwarded to my personal account. They are frequent contacts as well. Most of them, they are nice people. Some of them are probably nice but a little unbalanced and scary. A minority of them — but the minority that emails me the most, thus becoming FREQUENT — are psychotic men who think I deserve to be raped because I keep a blog about how I do not deserve to be raped, and this apparently causes the Hulk rage.

I can't block these people, because I never made a Google profile or Buzz profile, due to privacy concerns (apparently and resoundingly founded!). Which doesn't matter anyway, because every time I do block them, they are following me again in an hour. I'm hoping that they, like me, do not realize and are not intentionally following me, but that's the optimistic half of the glass. My pessimistic half is of the abyss, and it is staring back at you with a redolent stink-eye.

Oh, yes, I suppose I could opt out of Buzz — which I did when it was introduced, though that apparently has no effect on whether or not I am now using Buzz — but as soon as I did that, all sorts of new people were following me on my Reader! People I couldn't block, because I am not on Buzz!

Fuck you, Google. My privacy concerns are not trite. They are linked to my actual physical safety, and I will now have to spend the next few days maintaining that safety by continually knocking down followers as they pop up. A few days is how long I expect it will take before you either knock this shit off, or I delete every Google account I have ever had and use Bing out of fucking spite.

Fuck you, Google. You have destroyed over ten years of my goodwill and adoration, just so you could try and out-MySpace MySpace.



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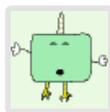
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 251 Responses



flakylayers [PERMALINK](#)

February 11, 2010

PREACH IT. It did this to me, too. I haven't had the followers-reappearing problem in Reader that you describe (yet), but boy, wasn't I just pleased as punch to see people I'd unfollowed or blocked added back in!

I clicked the "disable buzz" link at the bottom of Gmail the minute I found it, but does that mean that to really block people, I need to re-enable it, break all the chains it's trying to set up for me, and THEN disable it again? Shit.

Not to be stalker-y, but I will be following this thread to see what suggestions pop up for thwarting this mess. Buzz = EVIL.

Like or Dislike:  3  0



Zeborah [PERMALINK](#)

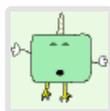
February 11, 2010

This is the second post I've seen today from someone in a similar position. 😞 The other person seems to have solved it for themselves (not saying this makes everything okay, just if it helps you until Google gets their A into G and fixes the damn thing) — to paraphrase the relevant stuff from what was in a locked post:

She managed to create her profile by accident, she thinks by trying to create a post (counterintuitive much?) and then making it private — this apparently created the profile, and then she could go into it and turn off the setting that shows your contact list to everyone.

She also linked to [this article about Buzz and privacy](#).

Like or Dislike:  1  0



flakylayers [PERMALINK](#)

February 11, 2010

I'm not sure, but I think I've killed it: I opened my Gmail in its own tab—if you read Gmail in iGoogle, do "launch full application" from that—and (sigh) clicked "turn on Buzz," from which I unfollowed/blocked the some-two-dozen people Buzz had so helpfully connected me to.

Then, I found where Buzz connects your other applications like Reader and Picasa, and clicked their "disable" links, so they'd shun Buzz like the filthy feral zombie that it is.

Then I disabled Buzz entirely. That felt . . . good.

Like or Dislike:  2  0

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Yatima PERMALINK

February 11, 2010

Yes. Exactly. Christ, Google: FAIL.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Sumana Harihareswara PERMALINK

February 11, 2010

It's really awful, isn't it?!

There's **some slight improvement** now that they've realized what they've done.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



ejp PERMALINK

February 11, 2010

You can change your Reader sharing settings so they are not Public.

[http://www.google.com/support/reader/bin/answer.py?](http://www.google.com/support/reader/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=83000#people)

[hl=en&answer=83000#people](http://www.google.com/support/reader/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=83000#people)

I think these settings in Reader were there pre-Buzz, but I'm uncertain.

Also, since I'm guessing you have no intention of using Buzz, you should likely remove Reader and the other services from Connected Sites in Buzz. (I think Reader is added to Buzz by default.) Just clicking the "turn off buzz" at the bottom of Gmail may not be enough.

Doing this should protect your Reader content.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Rebecca PERMALINK

February 11, 2010

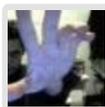
I posted about it on the Buzz help forums (not naming your name or your blog) and they gave me this link:

<http://gmailblog.blogspot.com/2010/02/millions-of-buzz-users-and-improvements.html>

I assume you've seen it, so, not too helpful.

This is really disappointing.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Drew PERMALINK

February 11, 2010

Wow, uh, I'm sorry? This was a giant goof on Google's part. Your situation is just one of many. Journalists who have had their anonymous sources outed as part of their gmail contacts. Government sources that talked to Iranian protestors, who have now been outed for full view to the Iranian government. It's not good. It was

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not wise.

I have a hard time believing that they really meant ill by this. But I have an easy time believing that a bunch of Google engineers excitedly threw the switch on this without really thinking about anything more than the technological implications.

Of course, the crazy thing is: what they did is really basically exactly what Facebook already does. It's just that that's not saying much...

Like or Dislike:  0  0



PG [PERMALINK](#)

February 11, 2010

This may be stupidly obvious, but do you have your Reader share setting on "protected"? The default is "public." I'm walking through this with a friend who uses all these features more than I, and she thinks you should be able to block unwanted folks from seeing your Reader shared stuff and comments just by adjusting to "protected" and making a group just for your boyfriend and ticking that one box so that only he can see.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Alice [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Yes. I can't say it any better than just yes. THESE are the issues that can get subsumed in generalities when we talk about privacy concerns, and these are the issues that I desperately wish Google had fucking thought of at all when choosing to roll out Buzz in this way. I have the privilege of just being annoyed at some of Google's choices, rather than having to feel fear. Maybe most of Google's staff share that privilege.

But it's a privilege, not a universally shared reality.

Like or Dislike:  1  0



Amanda [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Dear god.

I'd read about this in a privacy blog, but I didn't quite get that this could affect people who don't use Buzz at all.

#googleFAIL.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Logical Extremes [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

You've disabled Buzz, that's a good first step.

If you haven't already, step two is to edit your Google profile so that anything

public is the way you want. You can pare it down to name only (or pseudonym), or not have it public at all.

<https://www.google.com/profiles>

Then, in Google Reader's Sharing Settings, you can decide if you really want to share your Reader items publicly, or just with a select set of your Google Contacts.

You can make special lists of contacts here:

<https://www.google.com/contacts>

(Contacts is also available in GMail in the left column)

Like or Dislike:  0  0



scrivendreams PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I believe this article may assist you, good luck.

http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-10451703-2.html

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jennifer PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Harriet, are you actually sharing items? I also thought people had instant access to my Reader, but they don't – just whatever I chose to share with them, by marking 'share' at the bottom of each post. You can also block your shares from the public, meaning you would have to specifically specify who could see what you shared.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



bzzzzgrrrl PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Yes, yes, yes.

I think my new policy on Google Reader is that I will only share posts like this, which explain what the fuck is wrong with this situation, in case people a) don't know, or b) are following me without meaning to, because Buzz is apparently sending out "follow" requests to everyone in the universe. Which means Buzz may be creating the impression, to those malevolent folks who e-mail you a lot, that you WANT them following you.

Which, um.

Criminy.

"Fuck Google" indeed.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



anonymouse PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

This sort of stuff really annoys me about social software. Not even the fact that you can potentially have your information more exposed than you expected, but the fact that the people in charge can unilaterally change the level of exposure, radically and with no warning. It's as if your landlord decided to upgrade all the walls in your apartment to clear ones. While you were in the shower. What's worse is that the people making the decisions don't even see that there's any sort of problem here, because they're rich white boys from Mountain View and refuse to look past their own social context to see that for some people, this sort of thing is more than just an annoyance, it can be downright dangerous.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jeunelle Foster PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

You have a valid reason to be pissed alright and I'm sure that your complaint won't make it to the top of Googles search for pissed off Google customers. I'm sure they'll hide your valid complaint while they keep pissing on our leg and telling us it's raining.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



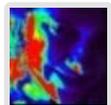
Jeffrey Y PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Hey, this sucks. The first thing you should do is look over <http://www.google.com/support/reader/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=83000#people> and turn your Reader's sharing to "protected" instead of "public". <http://www.google.com/reader/view/#friends-manager-page> should link directly there if you're logged in. I'm not sure if that'll stop people from following you, but it should stop them from seeing anything you share. (And I hope any comments you make since those are only visible through shared items, but it doesn't say that explicitly. This UI sucks.)

I also don't know if the people who are now "following" you can see your email address. I suspect not, given how hard it is for people to find `_my_` email address from my buzzes, even though I've made everything public that I can. They `_can_` see the name you've attached to your gmail account, which you can change (I think!) at <http://www.google.com/profiles/me/editprofile>. Except that looks remarkably like the profile you didn't create, so it might not work.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



muse PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I didn't know where to post this, but I read this and thought you might be interested in it: <http://yesmeansyesblog.wordpress.com/2010/02/11/no-place-to-tell-this-tale/>

I don't comment often but I do read your blog and appreciate it. I am a survivor.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Neil PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

This may be of assistance in your efforts to **get rid of buzz**

Like or Dislike: 0 0



David Stark PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

This is truly awful. I tried out Buzz myself and found it frustrating and largely pointless, but your situation is rather worse.

I guess ultimately the problem is that companies like Google feed on information about you and want to get and link up as much as they can.

Do you mind me trying to get this post more attention from the Interweb? It's a very good example of why privacy matters.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Jarvis PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

They really fucked up. I've been a fan of Google for years but I do not understand why more people have not voiced their opinion on this.

A simple question or prompt would have completely changed the situation. I email my friends and families, but occasionally my enemies. Thanks a lot Google, I wont last the year!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



froztbyte PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Wow. I must admit that some of these points here do definitely highlight Buzz being too invasive. I don't entirely mind the concept, but I have found the implementation to be distracting. When I open GMail, I want to only open GMail. That's why I leave facebook and twitter at home for the most part. Buzz is forcing itself in my face, and I haven't seen anything on the interface that makes it immediately obvious on how one can make Buzz less intrusive.

Hope that you get things there sorted, though! Definitely sounds like you could do with a little less worry in your life!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



cait PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I'm just dumbfounded that they should be this moronically stupid.

Do they not have a privacy and abuse team linked to their legal department or

something that should tick everything off before it goes live? How much money do they earn?

I cannot believe you're having to go through this and christ knows how many other women too. It's genuinely scary. I've switched everything off (tbh I had anyway, all way too intrusive) and am wondering if I should find myself a completely different email client.

My God, Google, I really hope you're reading this post and comments. You guys are the biggest bunch of fucking idiots. And to think you've just pissed all that China goodwill down the drain.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Belial [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

....whooooops, I probably should've read this before I re-clicked "follow" on the little notification that popped up this morning saying you were following me... Google's following system confuses the crap out of me.

Apologies for the potential-sketchy.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Rockon [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Thanks for posting about this. I've investigated Google Buzz after reading your post, and now it looks sinister instead of merely annoying.

Do you mind if I link to this post on the Google help forum for Buzz as an example of privacy concerns?

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs [PERMALINK](#) *

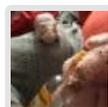
February 12, 2010

Did that and did that. Starting it all off, *I never enabled Buzz in the first place*, but it apparently gained sentience and enabled itself.

New followers kept popping up anyway, and my connected sites kept reconnecting.

It's been a fascinating night of madness.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs [PERMALINK](#) *

February 12, 2010

The fascinating thing is, new followers popped up after I disabled Buzz, and I couldn't make them unfollow me because I hadn't enabled Buzz!

Additionally, I have never made a Google profile, specifically because I had

privacy concerns. So I can't access any of these exciting privacy features without making a profile that invades my privacy.

Not to take it out on you. I know you're trying to help, and the comments people are leaving that are trying to help are going to be very useful to other people attempting to shut this down. But this is all stuff that should have been taken care of when *I didn't enable Buzz in the first place*, instead of a mad rush after the fact to find out who has had access to all my information for the last day or two.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs PERMALINK



February 12, 2010

I share items with my boyfriend. My Reader was set to be private and only shared with my boyfriend. Then followers started popping up without my permission or approval, and for an unknown period of time, all my followers had access to all my shared items, some of which contained sensitive information, such as:

"Ha ha look at this webcomic, it reminds me of (current place of employment)"

I've gone through my Reader settings, and they were never enabled to become public, but followers kept popping up anyway. I've had to click through and unfollow every new follower as they arrive, which I can only do if I enable Buzz, which I never wanted to be on in the first place.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Kevin Baughen PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

In the most genuinely unpatronizing and non-condescending way possible, good for you Fugitvus!

I'm tired of 'the pace of technology change' being used as an excuse by companies to launch stuff which simply doesn't work properly and I sincerely hope your views are taken seriously.

This has developed into a real safety concern for other like Fugitvus. Heard of grooming anyone?

In what other walk of life are companies allowed to get away with half-arsed services the way 'beta' projects do.

Google do your job properly, take this issue seriously and THINK about the people who make you what you are. DON'T become Microsoft and take them for granted... unless of course you don't give a toss. In which case, enjoy your profits and I hope a stock market scandal crushes you.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs PERMALINK



February 12, 2010

I knew *you* weren't being creepy, but you did provide me a fascinating look into what was happening. Because *you* popped up as a follower after I had 1) deleted

all my followers, 2) checked and double-checked and triple-checked that my Reader settings were private, and 3) disabled Buzz, thus letting me know that following all those steps does not actually protect my privacy. And then, of course, I couldn't make you unfollow me without turning Buzz back on.

So, actually, you kind of did me a service by popping up so suddenly — I would've naively thought it had all been taken care of otherwise.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Belial [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Well, glad to be of (maddening, frustrating) service. If it helps your troubleshooting, like I said, me following you came as a result of google hitting me with a notification that *you* were requesting to follow *me*.

Judging by the fact that you were busily trying to shut off and block everything, I'm guessing that wasn't intentional or desirable on your part. Which means google isn't just *letting* people follow you, they're out there sending requests on your behalf without your permission.

What the fuck?

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Belial [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Actually...wait. This blogpost predates the part where I even clicked that....

Holy shit, I have no idea what's even going on. I have stared into the depths of google and gone mad.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Natalie [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Google didn't think the implications of this through, did they? Just a bunch of (probably male) geeks in the room who masturbated to the idea of instant connections branching all over the world, and didn't consider how actual real people might be affected by it. It's truly stupid not to consider potential for abuse and stalking through Buzz when developing the service.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jacob [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Well said.

Buzz is #fail

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Kevin [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I did a blog post myself on how much Google are drilling themselves into the ground with a fierce determination to stop being brilliant at a few things (like search, or basic email) and now just being mediocre at a million different things. How does a business who's mission statement is to "sort" the web noise into meaningful, personalised content put out a phone and try to be a social network?

They're losing the people's trust. It's no wonder Larry Paige has been so quiet in the last 2 years... this seems like it's all Sergei and Eric Schmidts work.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Darius K. [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Because I don't bother to read the comments above me, I thought you'd like to know that you can set your Reader to "protected." See how helpful I am?!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



mythago [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I imagine that my friends who work for Google will be pissed off if they read this comment, but: you have to understand that Google really does drink the kool-aid. They really are convinced that when they do thoughtless, self-serving shit that it's OK because *we're not evil!* and *hey, we were just trying to help!*, so if it were self-serving and thoughtless shit if, oh Microsoft did it, it's transformed from shit into gold by the magic of Google's Don't Be Evil alchemy.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Sandy [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I haven't had this issue that I know of...but I have had Google link my YouTube account with my gmail account where everytime I logged into gmail I was logged into YouTube even though, like you, my gmail is private and was never connected to YT. Not even sure how they knew to connect it actually... Now it makes me wonder if I really want to continue using Gmail if they Google is going to be like Facebook and just share everything with everybody.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Palais [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

The irony of all this is that Google's motto is, "Don't Be Evil." Seriously.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Carlo Piana [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Send Google a cease-and-desist letter and by all means publish it. We don't mind you using swear words.

Never trusted Google for email, although I was one of the first using a Gmail accounts in Italy. Privacy, as many rights, cannot be given away for convenience and expedience.

Thanks for sharing your experience. I am fully supportive.

Cheers

Carlo

Like or Dislike: 0 0



devolved [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Google seem to think your contacts are their IP, they opt you into a similar thing on YouTube and god knows what else.

"Do no evil" lost any meaning some time ago.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



ErisDS [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I have always <3'd Google, but just recently these gaffs have started to make me wonder.

I got an iPhone a couple of months ago and set it up with Google Sync so that my contacts, calendar and email are synced. Suddenly my real name (which I guard relatively closely just because I think it is sensible to do so) was popping up all over mailing lists.

I realised that everytime I replied to an email via my iPhone (and therefore Google Sync) it was pulling my real name from my google account, even though the "Display my full name so I can be found in search" checkbox was unselected.

So yeah, Google Sync promptly ignores that checkbox. I'm not sure if it still does, I reported the bug but haven't heard anything since. I've just removed all my details from Google as they've proved themselves untrustworthy.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Ranger Six [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I guess I'm lucky, so far – I've scoured all of the settings for both of my (admittedly pseudonymous) Google profiles, and I've seen no traces of Buzz

anywhere as yet.

However, you do raise some rather frightening concerns, especially given your experiences – for some people, it may simply be an annoyance, but for others this Google Buzz fiasco may well be a matter of life and death.

I hope that your luck holds, and that this doesn't cause any trouble for you.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Byron [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I just came upon your blog because there was a link that said "Fuck you, Google" on popurls.com. I couldn't agree with you more. Thankfully I found the button to at least turn Buzz off. I'll gladly bookmark your blog now, well said!

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Marisa [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Google really did not think this one through when they launched Buzz on the unsuspecting public. What grates my carrot is the auto-follow thing as well as the fact that everything about you is public by default (you have to specifically go in afterwards to make it private). NOT cool.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Scotty [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Rich white boys? Well, that's not both sexist and racist, is it?

Like or Dislike:  0  1



Scotty [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I recently deleted my Facebook account because of their diddling around with privacy settings. It's a shame Google didn't think this through. I like Buzz myself but I don't think anyone should be able to "follow" (hello?!) me without consent.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Alek [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Thumbs up for the great post 😊

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Brian [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Start the lawsuit rolling NOW. Seriously.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Lollie Dot Com [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I love everything about google EXCEPT their add everyone bs. I really hate that. When I read it's policy before signing up I saw that and backed out. Now so glad I did. Wake up google. Fix this asap.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Newman Hunter [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

The real solution is to move your accounts to a provider where you have a relationship where they're actually accountable to you. Your ISP is a good example. They provide email as part of your account, you pay them. Part of that is being directly accountable to you for what they do with your data.

Google uses the data you provide them in whatever way they see fit. GMail has always exposed your private data to advertisers in order to display adsense to you.

Terms of Service matter. Without reading what they are, you're always going to be vulnerable to this. Most people don't give two shits about trading away their private information for a free service. If it matters, then move to a service that you pay for and can hold accountable when they make transgressions like this one.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Rafal Los [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

ANOTHER example of "Google's brilliant innovation" without second thought to the crap they're churning out. BUZZ is a piece of crap and Google should be sued for the many, many, many violations of privacy they just created.

Idiots.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



minghan [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I'm deleting each and every one of my gmail account; I'm also telling all my friends that I will only email them at their non-gmail addy.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Ryan Bollenbach PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Holy shit, I feel bad for you... Google has made a major blunder.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Gubatron PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

It's awesome to find people that understand the reason to have privacy. There seems to be a lot of people eating the "I have nothing to hide, who needs privacy?" bullshit.

People seem to forget that they live in a real world, and that people can actually harm you. There's shit that needs to be private, specially outside of the US where on some cities life is worth a pair of shoes and kidnapping is an every day event for people.

Awesome Fuck you google post.

Here are some of my concerns about Google lately, which keeps accelerating week by week in product offering and company purchasing, this is getting too scary.

<http://www.gubatron.com/blog/2009/12/14/the-internet-is-becoming-the-googlenet/>

Like or Dislike: 0 0



J PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I had an (differently) abusive ex who literally stole my children, sued me five times, got me fired from 3 different jobs, and generally destroyed my life over 7 years. Not physical abuse, but mental, legal, and emotional abuse involving two kids. Yes I'm a male, but the effect was and is still devastating.

This whole "friend" concept on Facebook and Twitter – this idea that being open totally public is safe... it only works when there is not a fucking psycho out there working to harm you. And they DO exist. Its a naive openness that works when practiced from the beginning – not all of us a middle generation have that luxury.

I have Google accounts because many Google services required them early on – and their services work well, and interactions with other people required it. I've ****never**** used Google for email communications or with any real personal data for EXACTLY this reason.

Culture comes from the top, Eric – I'm talking to you, Eric Schmidt. These real people who use your service rely on your actions and the culture you create. If you only make business decisions to support your (financially) paying customers, the advertisers, then Google becomes much worse than the credit reporting agencies – at least their privacy skullfuckery is regulated.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Rhyaniwyn PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

It sounds to me that Google may have jumped the gun on this deployment and dropped the ball on privacy.

It doesn't affect me because all of my google accounts were semi-public already and everything private was set to be so. But I sympathize with your situation, it sounds frightening and upsetting.

But it may be that things are not quite as bad as you suspect. I believe the only things people can see are things that (a) were already public in your Reader account or (b) which you can see showing up on the "Buzz" page.

I connected my blog and my most recent entry popped up on that page. Prior to it appearing, it wasn't in Buzz. I believe the people following me (and I have a bunch of random follows from people not in my contacts at all) only see/get notices about things that are imported into Buzz.

So if your Reader is private and no random person (logged into Google or not) can see your posts and comments by going directly to your Reader page and you've disabled Buzz, I'm fairly sure your followers are not seeing anything at all, aside from your the name and e-mail address you have entered into Gmail.

Nothing I've marked private has shown up in Buzz (though I can't really test to see if following gives me any other permissions on others' accounts I wouldn't have had before).

I may be wrong, because it's certainly possible this release is fraught with bugs. But my observations as someone checking this out lead me to believe that your privacy has not been violated to the degree you are rightly worried about.

Now, it shouldn't have been violated at ALL and you shouldn't be having to go through this or worry about it. If I were you I'd be screaming mad. But it may not be as bad as it looks and if that's the case I'm sure it will be a bit of a relief, although it still won't be any excuse for Google's mistakes here.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Janey PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Just wondering why you didn't just create a new gmail account since you only use it to talk to your boyfriend and your mom. Let the old one sit and rot. Throw it and your idiot ex into internet history.

Google screwed up so bad with Buzz. I sure as hell never wanted it either! You're right, they're trying to become Myspace. Actually I think they're trying to become the next AOL now that Google is trying to roll out their own fiber.

Fuck you, Google. Srsly.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Karel PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I just want to tell you your post is on top on hacker news –

<http://news.ycombinator.com/>

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Rhyaniwyn PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Since you two know each other, I would ask if Belial can see anything of Harriet's in Buzz. Can you see any Google Reader posts or comments? Location? Are you getting any notifications? Do you see any "more" of Harriet's content than what you can see when you go into your Google Contacts?

That might indicate how truly serious this is — I don't mean to say it's not serious if Belial can't see anything — but if I were you I'd want to know exactly how much of my information had become available, if any. And if nothing had really gone out, I'd still be mad and annoyed with Buzz, but relieved, too.

What you discover will help others who have similar concerns.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Squaregirl PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Um, this *really* concerns me. I'm aware my online presence is more than most people normally share with strangers, but it's part of my job, and I am able to control who sees how much. It's a fine balance, and I certainly don't want Google tipping the scales.

Is there any way to know how much others can see if you're not a Buzz user? I never even took it for a test spin, and I opted out of Buzz updates in the Inbox footer link.

I've searched online to no avail, lots of advice for opting out after the fact out there. (Although according to the post doesn't sound like a 100% opt out.)

Like or Dislike:  0  0



José PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I moved Buzz and the Buzz contacts to another e-mail account I have for news and other subscriptions...

<http://mechpoe.blogspot.com/2009/12/social-rings-simple-method-for.html>

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Elizabeth PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Judging by how buzz works, if you have those reader settings marked as private, or shared only to your boyfriend, they might still be private, even though you have followers. Your followers would see anything in future you marked as public, but not the stuff marked as private. At least, that seems to be what would make

sense. (Though 'sense' might have nothing to do with how they treat this function)

Do you have a friend who could subscribe to you (who doesn't have access to your reader) and tell you if s/he sees anything, just so you can judge how much damage may have been done?

Like or Dislike:  0  0



JeffreyY PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Oh! You can help in a way I can't. I don't know what Buzz actually shared for harriet, but I can't look to find out because it isn't suggesting I follow her. I believe "follow" just means you see whatever she posts publicly, but not that she's actually posted anything you can see. Could you actually see any posts from Harriet once you followed her? If you could, that's a huge bug. If not, buzz didn't actually make anything public that Harriet didn't want; it just failed at making that clear.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Vidli PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

One might say this marks 2 Google fail whales in less than a month...

Check out this post about Google's failure with Youtube Rentals...

bit.ly/cHsv1W

thanks for spreading awareness about buzz...your story really hits home.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



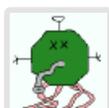
JK PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

GOOGLE is losing my trust.

Imagine.... one brain fart from google and all of my privacy could be gone. This one wasn't the end of the world... but what's next?

Like or Dislike:  0  0



carterhaugh PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Good gods, this is awful.

Google have absolutely failed here, and it's annoying for most of us, but appalling that you (and probably others) have had your personal safety put at risk.

I'm having serious thoughts of moving my various accounts over elsewhere. It would be a huge hassle, but unless they chuck Buzz first and recognise how much good-will they've lost here.

All the best of luck with sorting this out at your end. Am thinking of you.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



id8 PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

You have expressed my anger with this.

I am generally not a "there ought to be a law" type, but...

How the heck could one phrase it, to protect us from arbitrary, random changes?

"Thou shalt be Opt-In"

Hopefully this incident will generate a lot more interest in privacy issues.

This is not an innocent mistake by Google. This was done by design, a conscious

decision to generate usage numbers,

their great success now at the top of techmeme.

Millions of users! Aren't we great success!!

Don't know what good it will do, but I sent off emails to my congress people.

Some cages need some serious rattling.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



DL Byron PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Can confirm whatever you do to turn Buzz off, it comes back . . .

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Heather PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Bing and Clusty are both good search engine choices, if you decide to ditch the Google.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



@ClinicEscort PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

THANK YOU. I have the exact same deal going on with a public email address being forwarded to a private Gmail address which is now apparently NOT SO GODDAMNED PRIVATE ANYMORE. When I first saw the screaming about Google Buzz yesterday morning I logged in to try to figure out how to opt out, and found that I already had "new followers" on Buzz, fully 50% of which were names I didn't recognize at all.

I am trying to keep some distance between me and the INTERNET FULL OF CRAZY PEOPLE and Google is trying not to let me. Appreciate that. No really... thanks.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Yousef PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I think Buzz is a sign of Google's decline, when a company like Google tries to diversify this way, it just goes on to prove that they are feeling the heat!

I hope Google will stop being evil and actually practice that which they preach "dont be evil".

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Mattack PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Wow... sounds awful. Your privacy concerns are very real. Unfortunately today's internet climate is all about sharing information and even geo-location.

I suggest using other providers for your email and RSS feeds, and give up web-based applications if you can.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



ara.t.howard PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

wow. so sorry this is happening to you. everyone appreciates you taking the time to write about it though – so thanks for that.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Heather PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Also, here is how to delete your Google accounts:

<http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=8152>

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Karel PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

...and hey, your blog is actually quite good.

Even that, according to your posts, I am a racist, misogynist and elitist. But hey, that's how life is.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



viksit PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Looks like I wasn't the only one 😊

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0



jessicadally PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

THANK YOU for posting this. Thank you.

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0



yorksranter PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Install an e-mail client (like Mozilla Thunderbird, it's free) and use the Accounts menu to set up a new Disconnected IMAP account. The details you will need can be found in the GMail Help section. Subscribe to all your folders except Spam and Trash. Now hit "check for new mail", and go and do something less dull, as this will cause the client to download everything in your GMail folders to a cache on your local hard disk.

If you've been using GMail for a while you will probably want to check you have enough disk space first (and if it's a laptop, consider going somewhere with a really fast connection).

You can now tell Google to fuck off and hook up another e-mail provider.

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0



John PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Reader is a tool for following RSS feeds. It's really unclear to me why I had to jump through hoops to make reading my selection of RSS feeds a private activity (& I am still not sure it worked). The assumption that we want to share and follow and be followed in every aspect of what we do online is annoying for some of us, dangerous for others.

I really like Gmail, and I really like Reader, and I really like a lot of things Google has built, but the creep factor of using them is just going through the roof. (& now they want to sell me a phone?)

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0



Kerrick PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

They're asking for a class-action lawsuit.

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0

Jeff Bridges PERMALINK



February 12, 2010

Brave!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Kyle [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I honestly don't mean to be an ass or anything because I can understand how it might have confused you at the beginning, but on the first clickthrough screen as well as multiple times on the screen that you first come to when you sign up for Buzz, it alerts you that the people who contact you most have been

Most people who correspond with others do not have to deal with stalkers. You, unfortunately, are an aberration from that norm. Google brought Buzz out with the majority in mind – those of us who contact and are contacted by people that we interact normally in real life with.

As someone who has to deal with stalkers and potentially dangerous breaches of privacy, you may have wanted to take extra precautions when signing up for your account – precautions such as checking your contact list quickly before posting additional contact and verifying what you did have shared on your Google account.

In addition, Google allows you to decide what is shared on Buzz and what is not. Anything that is linked to your Google Profile (which is already public) can be linked to your Buzz account. If there was information in your Google Reader account that could put you into danger, connecting it may have not been a good idea. That said, the notes and “likes” from Google reader that you post have most likely been publicly available since before you signed up with Buzz.

Again, sorry about your situation, but everybody here seems to be freaking out without actually knowing what they're talking about. They act like there is no option to opt-out and no warning that you have been auto-added to the list of others when it's actually very clear what's going on.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Margaret [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I agree with the privacy concerns & outrage voiced here, so I won't repeat what's already been said. I'm pretty astounded that they are doing this, and I honestly wonder if the stunt they pulled is legally actionable.

In the meantime, I've found a couple pages that explain ways to turn off the buzz stuff. In short, apparently you need to turn it back on for a minute to get at certain controls, delete certain things, block others, and THEN turn it off entirely. Yeah, I'm baffled too, and lacking confidence they won't find other ways of fouling this thing up again. And I'm lucky I don't have any danger anticipated as the consequence of the wrong person seeing who I'm in touch with.

Here are the articles that contain instructions, explained in different ways. I hope this helps a little. Be safe.

http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-10451703-2.html

<http://blogs.reuters.com/mediafile/2010/02/12/google-walks-into-privacy-buzz-saw/>

<http://www.scotxblog.com/legal-tech/gmails-turn-off-buzz-still-does-not-turn-off-buzz-heres-how-to-really-do-it/>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/warning-google-buzz-has-a-huge-privacy-flaw-2010-2#or-just-scroll-to-the-bottom-of-the-page-and-turn-buzz-off-4>

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Russ Nelson PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

wow, your blog posting definitely has the twitter mojo today! I had four people retweet this URL to me.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Tomoe PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Even if they follow you, they can't see your shared items, if you configured your privacy settings correctly (set protected mode and allowed only your boyfriend to be a viewer).

Also, your followers does not see your email address. So you have nothing to worry about.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



john PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Bing is better anyway. Go to Bing!

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Molly PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I have a similar concern — crazy ex convicted of a felony after I left him. The last thing I want is for him or any of his family to have any access to me. I'm de-Googleing my life now. It's too bad; Google makes great products and I find them incredibly useful. But I refuse to accept the idea that to participate online I must sacrifice every shred of my privacy.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Beverly PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Yep, add me to the list of people whose ex-husband was top on the list.

Ridiculous.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



nicole PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

well-stated, although i'm so sorry you've had to state it in the first place. google buzz is a nauseating invasion of – no, removal of – any semblance of privacy that we have come to utilize and respect about our own private email accounts.

i am thinking of you, and hoping that you are feeling safe and secure, and crossing my fingers for all of our sakes that someone at google wakes the fuck up. this sucks.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



rich r PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Total agreement. Buzz is like a game of Space Invaders that Google unleashed on its users. Email contacts are descending left and right and you need to hit "Block" before they hit you.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Reprodukt PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Google services have never been about privacy protection. Anything you write and create there is public and due to their confusing navigation it's nearly impossible to find out where to turn off this and that privacy option.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

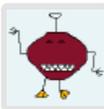


Jeff PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Woah, that's intense. Didn't see that one coming. You outed the biggest company on the planet – right on!

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Joshua W. Burton PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I use my private Gmail account to . . .

You already lost me. What is a "private Gmail account," and how would you keep Google from finding out about it?

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Longasc PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

The funny thing is, they want us to store even more of our personal data in their “cloud” – so that we can access it from everywhere.

And everyone else apparently as well.

This lack of privacy and Google not caring much about it is inexcusable.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



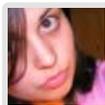
Anas PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Go to the bottom of your gmail page, click “turn off buzz” problem solved. Also, you can now block people, and hid your lists.

I agree, the initial launch was a major fuck up. They have offered better privacy since then though.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Lena PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Fortunately, it is possible to block people on gReader without using buzz.

Try this: <http://www.google.com/reader/view/#friends-manager-page>

If that link doesn't work, click on the tiny sharing settings link in gReader's left column below the People You Follow section.

Hope that helps 😊

FTR, it was a dumb move for Google to make the same mistake with Buzz they made with gReader when they first introduced sharing (assuming someone you email is someone you care about).

Like or Dislike: 0 0



JJ PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I had all of my shared items set to “shared publicly”. Obviously, my followers and anyone going to my public profile could see this.

As a test, I changed this to “share privately” with a group. After this, my google profile no longer showed teh shared items.

I asked one of my followers to check... he too, couldn't see my shared items.

So, as long as you were set to Share Private, I don't believe your follows would have seen anything.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Dina PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

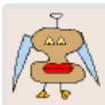
Okay, now I'm just plain scared.

Just found Google Buzz on my account, glanced to what it was, and found a former "flirtation" from another social media site. Surprise! This man no longer had my info, at least as far as I knew, but there he was. While he's not a stalker, per se, and I do not fear him, I did in fact de-friend him on all my accounts. I had very good reasons for this.

I have not asked for, nor have I enabled this Buzz on Google. I didn't even know what it was till your blog URL was posted on Twitter today. I will retweet it. And then some.

Once I'm calmer, I plan to go back and read the rest of these posts. Right now I'm speechless – and sending up a prayer for your safety.

Like or Dislike: 1 0



labilis PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

SUE THEM

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Edwin Khodabakchian PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Update: Google listened to the users concerns and pushed an update yesterday which let users choose if they want to include the list of the people they follow on their profile or not.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Markus Hegi PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Every Developer of social software should read that CAREFULLY – not because its about Google buzz (doesnt matter what social software), but because its a great real live example of what may happen, if you try to create a TRANSPARENT, OPEN system, but the access rights are not transparent ... and badly manageable!

More: http://ex.colayer.com/SPOT_sectionprivacyt

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Jessica PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I think those spurious "followers" couldn't actually see anything, if everything you shared in Reader was marked as private. It's possible can have a mix of private and public parts of reader; those "followers" should only have been able to see

anything that you had marked as public.

I agree that it's a huge privacy fail on Google's part, but actually think you're OK here.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Anon Indian Woman [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Not to put too fine a point on it but Facebook? Not the same as email! I assume my email is private, I know my facebook updates are not (duh, that is the point). Which is why dickng about with my email and making it facebook-like WITHOUT ASKING MY PERMISSION is so many kinds of messed up.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Joseph [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Thanks for writing this post. I completely agree with you. Fortunately, I have no specific concern about any one of my contacts seeing the others, so Google's huge and fucking idiotic privacy infringement had no specific effect on me. But it only takes 30 seconds of reflection to realize that most people have various social and business circles and that sometimes the circles don't mix. Their half ass apology and half ass correction only makes it worse, and they should immediately acknowledge that they made a mistake, say that they have no fucking business publishing a user's contact list, and that they'll never do it again, ever.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



FNKat [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Im so upset with google and their greedy goal to own the internet and all its information. Why cant you just focus on what you do well SEARCH!!!

Ive just completely deleted my gmail account as Ive found their whole ecosystem of services to be so disjointed, intertwined and confusing as to whats what and who can see this or that.

I give up and Im mad as hell! Google a once good service is trying to be more than I ever wanted it to be without asking should we do this?. You are greedy and without a conscience.

Bing is now my new search engine at least they dont try to own me.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



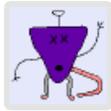
ben [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Another thing. When signing in, gmail asked me whether to try Buzz or not. I have been hearing about all these security risks, so I clicked on "nah, just take me

to my inbox” or something like that. And there it was. Buzz was already integrated into my gmail, and already several people were following me. What the fuck? Why do you ask me if I want to try or not if you will just force it on me whether or not I want it. This is clearly a subject of collective lawsuit. I dont understand why all these early adopters seem to love this. Don't be Evil? Yeah, right.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Joseph [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

BTW, as for the pervasive link in Gmail, it can be removed. Go into your gmail settings, click on “labels”, and then select “hide” beside the Buzz label.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



mxjx [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

You are right to be angry. I dont understand why they are so ignorant with features. You'd think they would do better than this. I mean, privacy aside, you cant even stop buzz from going to your inbox. Isnt that an obvious feature to include??? a fuckin checkbox that says “dont email me every time”? I guess not... god damn it. They are so powerful and we have HUGE faith in them, you know, overall, they should mind their e-manners better.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Eva [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I had a really hard time figuring out what the hell was going on with Buzz until I realized that it hooks things up before you have agreed to have a profile at all! I had to agree to create a public profile in order to tell it to stop being public. That was so many kinds of not cool...

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Anonymous [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Wow. Fuck Google.

Is there a userscript to rewrite any requests to “www.google.com” to “www.bing.com”? Because I seriously need that.

Fuck. Google.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Peggy Dolane [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Totally there with you. Did you see this post about changes being made today about buzz privacy? Maybe they do listen.

<http://thenextweb.com/apps/2010/02/12/google-making-buzz-based-feedback-fast/>

Also see this post on SSN & Google. Scary:

<http://jack-mannino.blogspot.com/2010/02/dont-search-for-your-social-security.html>

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Bijuterii fantezie [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Very appreciate your posting about this. Now I can think again Google Buzz and never use.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jon Hanna [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Sometimes seems they're pissing on our legs and saying we should be glad that their free irrigation service is ad-funded and has no fee.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Mojuba [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Don't forget to disable all kinds of "autosshare" and "connections" between accounts on YouTube.com (YouTube is another Google service, remember?). Any one of your email contacts can see your activity feed on YouTube via Reader, including videos you fav'ed, commented on, and so on.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jon Hanna [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Frankly, if I'd had a g-mail account last month, I wouldn't have one now.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Zeborah [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I've done some thorough investigating of Buzz this morning. As of this morning at least, I'm pretty sure that sharing of items/information/contacts/etc is actually opt-in, even though all the language used on the screen makes it look like it's a fait accompli.

I've documented my explorations **on my blog**, and finished with privacy recommendations that seem to fit my findings.

I hope this is reassuring. I don't think it excuses anything: even if Google just *says* it's sharing all your stuff without your say-so but doesn't actually do it, that's really scary, and it's really bad to a) lie and b) scare people.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



JP PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Don't you have to ENABLE Buzz for all this to even happen?

Like or Dislike:  0  0



seesb PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Excellent writing. My initial response was "holy fuck, they can NOT be that stupid". So I went and checked my gmail account (which I never use, lucky me).

Yup. They're that stupid. Holy fuck.

Thanks for writing clearly and lucidly about this, and giving a nice, unambiguous, case in which it is not merely "undesireable" to automatically distribute previously private data, but potentially fatal or at the very least incredibly dangerous. I have forwarded this to a list containing at least one moderately managerial sort who works at Google, and at least a few people who are going to be able to comprehend just how incredibly fucking stupid this is.

Take care, and here's hoping that none of the people auto-added actually SAW anything before you got things a bit more under control.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Patrick PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

"It's as if your landlord decided to upgrade all the walls in your apartment to clear ones. While you were in the shower. "

That is priceless.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Simon PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Here's a comment on the reddit link to this post that you might find helpful:

http://www.reddit.com/r/technology/comments/b1bhy/google_buzz_autofollowed_a_womans_abusive_ex_who/c0kg8xp?context=1

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Michael [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Much needed! Thank you! Too many companies are obliterating privacy in the competitive chase for the social media “holy grail”.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Daniel [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I think you meant, “out-Facebook Facebook”

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Jack Yan [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

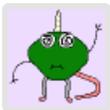
And I thought my privacy complaints were major. Well, nowhere nearly as major as yours—since mine don’t involve my physical safety.

While Buzz is not among my Google services (and hopefully never will be), I was shocked to find pictures I never uploaded in my Picasa account, that Google had turned on my Web History *after* I opted out of it, that I had people following me in Reader even though I never turned on Reader, that I have Google Talk even though I don’t use Gmail and never asked for that service, that AdSense remains in my ‘products’ on my Google Account page even after I cancelled my account, and so on.

Meanwhile, stuff I have to use, they find every possible way of blocking me. I helped a friend get his deleted blog, called Social Media Consortium, back. Google says it takes 48 hours. Well, it took six months and massive obstruction on its “help” forums. That’s covered elsewhere.

Google is just another big, uncaring company now, which seemingly does not see things from the everyday person’s point of view any more. I have been cancelling my subscriptions to most Google services since the beginning of the year, leaving Search and News, and not much else.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Bob [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Totally agree! Google really fucked up here. What’s the problem with rolling out Buzz with full privacy and letting people opt in? I guess Google can’t be bothered learning from Facebook and the backlash of their “we’re increasing your privacy” bullshit. Wake up guys!! If you care about your users don’t screw us on privacy.

Like or Dislike: 0 0

Paul [PERMALINK](#)



February 12, 2010

Well done! Google needs to BUZZ OFF.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Jesper Andersen [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Hi Harriet!

Never been to your blog before – I got the link from a friend on Twitter – but I must say: What a refreshing combination of wit and rage!! 😊

I understand your situation is not funny, but you write with such a passion that I could not help smile. I admire that you are not calling Google worse names!

So, hope everything works out for you and here's good luck from little Denmark! 😊 Jesper

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Natalie Rose [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Wow. I thought Buzz's design was superior to it's forerunners, but not if it's sacrificing its users privacy for them. That's insane.

Is there someplace in particular we might submit complaints to Google? If they get a landslide after one day, they'll have to address the situation.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Lenny [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

With Buzz Google simply confirmed that they give a rats *ss about anyone's privacy and has an unsatisfyable hunger for data.

I switched to Bing, Google's getting a bit too much overhand in my daily life.

So I agree with the topic: F*ck you Google!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Joe J. [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I honestly think the point is, she shouldn't HAVE to turn all of this off. Why in the hell did Google do this in the first place.

Oh yeah, because real time search data is valuable.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Tony [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I'm wondering if part of the reason the updated settings didn't take hold was because of republished or cached pages?

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Neatchee [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I'd be curious to know just what having a "follower" means. Yes, it's true that it seems anyone can follow you. But how much information does this actually get them, especially if your Reader settings have been made private. Have you actually tested this by creating a new google account and using it to follow your real account? How much information gets through?

Point is, if the only thing being a "follower" does for someone is put their name on your list...but they can't actually see any of your posts because you have not opted to make them public...then what difference does it make? Not saying this is the case, just wondering if it may be relevant.

I'd be curious to see someone do a very concise, point by point breakdown of how each individual setting and configuration of follower/followee impacts real-world results.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Richard [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Virgin Media customers reading this may not be aware their email service is now provided through Google, because they've kept their original address throughout the transition.

This, despite assurances to the contrary, is a gross invasion of privacy... read the T&Cs and weep!

If, like me, they think having this foisted upon them without their consent sucks ass, then it's quite easy to set up your own email that avoids Google.

If you obtain some webspace of your own from somewhere it'll almost always come with some mailboxes you can set up with your own domain name, many of them have quite effective spam-filtering available too.

For anybody who has privacy concerns – and most right-minded people would have – I'd thoroughly recommend exploring that option.

Richard

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Heather [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I also had my abusive ex-husband auto-follow me, despite being blocked from

chat and also had sensitive email addresses compromised.

I still can't get him blocked. I removed the other emails from my account, but I don't trust that they aren't accessible now from somewhere else.

I had a restraining order out against this man. He threatened to "slit my F**ing throat" and kidnap my son. When I was actively leaving him, he threatened to kill my domestic abuse counselor. If Google did this then, he may have succeeded.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



bob [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

If you have already set your Google Reader to only share with certain Google Contacts groups, people not in those groups will not see your Google Reader items in Buzz. If you have not done this, your Reader items were public long before Buzz was launched.

Items shared before making a change to your contacts will not be updated. This sorta makes sense programmatically even though it'd be nice if they were.

Just because someone's following you doesn't mean they'll see the stuff you mark as private and exclude them from.

Therefore, you must have had your ex in a Google Contacts group that you were sharing Reader items with before the launch of Buzz. Buzz made those Reader items more obvious and easier to find, but I'm pretty sure he could have found them before if he tried.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Ro [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I can't pretend that my privacy concerns are anything like as serious as yours, but I value my online anonymity. It enables me to keep a firewall between my blog/Twitter life and my child/ex/colleagues.

If that breaks down, my life would get a lot more complicated very quickly.

And I really don't think I can be bothered to unravel and rebuild my online life from scratch ...

Like or Dislike:  0  0



living400lbs [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

When logging into Gmail, I told it not to bother with Buzz. It still put Buzz on my left nav in Gmail; when I click Buzz, it still shows several people "following" me and it says that "Your Google Reader shared items, Picasa Web public albums, and Google Chat status messages will automatically appear as posts in Buzz."

I think it's a damn good thing I do not use Google Reader or Picasa Web public albums. I guess now I never will.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



wooteis PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I love you for hating Buzz. And I love the Internets for sharing your hate.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Kristen PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

That is absolutely horrifying. Good luck!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Sammy Ashouri PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I'm jumping on the "Fuck Google" bandwagon.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Peter PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I guess this proves that "Google hires the world's brightest people" is a myth.

What were they thinking?

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Heather PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

One thing that may interest you:

Check out: <https://www.google.com/dashboard/>

It shows you your google services and the privacy settings.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Nolo DeFrancis PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Yes. I hate Buzz. And most things.

Like or Dislike: 0 0

redwraithvienna PERMALINK



February 12, 2010

Well yeah ... it is what facebook does. The thing is : With facebook i know what it does. I enabled it. I gave it my data and got something in return.

With buzz i didnt do anything like that. It was just there. Suddenly. Without ever hearing about it before. Take Google Wave. 3 – 4 months before they opend the beta i knew what to expect and could choose to join.

Well i turned buzz off as much as possible ... and i am not sure if i ever turn it on again.

Massive Google Fail in my opinion.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Sad Again PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

What most makes me sad about this situation is that it isn't the first time.

Google seems to always fail massively when trying to do social software.

Look at what happened 2 years ago, December 2007:

<http://fhonearth.blogspot.com/2007/12/google-reader-shares-private-data-ruins.html>



(so they learned nothing)

Like or Dislike: 0 0

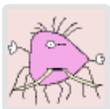


rinkjustice PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Triumphant post in a way. You FTW.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



etienne taylor PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Wow. You helped me reassess my own Google-worldview. I'm sitting here literally rubbing my eyes trying to figure out what level of twitter envy it must have taken to get Google to miss such an obvious threat to the unique position of trust they have enjoyed for so long.

I'll spare you another Dilbert analogy and just say that sheer scale seems to have this effect on organized groups of otherwise well meaning people.

Somewhere Larry Ellison is cackling.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



N PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Dear God! Thanks for making it crystal fucking clear why privacy matters. Don't be evil my ass.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



woody PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

FAIL does not go far enough to describe this. This is GOOGLE EPIC FAIL for want of a better term.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Katie PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Hey Fugitivus:

Sorry you had to go through all that...blech!

While we can't solve all of the privacy failings in the digital cloud, we are able to keep all your searches private! No tracking cookies...no storing of your IP address...even if we were given a court order to hand over your information, we couldn't do it...because we don't keep it! Before you try another one of those search engines that spy on you, give <https://startpage.com> a try and see what you think. In the meantime, you may want to look at setting up a Hushmail account (<https://www.hushmail.com/>) and keep your emails private, too! Cheers!

Katie at Startpage.com

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Robert PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I have never heard of you, but your post is the best realized description of how Buzz can seriously hurt somebody. I am recently divorced and have kept a private blog (as a sub domain to my main site) as an anonymous journal. Well, fuck me if it didn't start posting my divorce entries (and I'm talking heavy therapy session stuff and my med scripts). Bam! right into my Buzz. When I saw them I did a complete spittake of my morning coffee on my computer monitor. Mother fuckers, really ruined my day

Like or Dislike: 0 0



TracyLynn PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I'm sorry this happened to you. For the people trying to help by explaining that now Google has added features to it, I say this, too little, too late.

The very night that Buzz showed up I deleted my Gmail, am in process of getting rid of my google cell phone. They handled it all wrong right out of the gate. This should have been an 'opt in' program. Instead, they took it upon themselves to cram it down our throats. Unacceptable! Your case, in particular, shows what a huge business move Google made. I used to love Google, now I'm standing by, arms crossed waiting to watch them fall flat on their face!

Good luck to you.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs [PERMALINK](#) *

February 12, 2010

I had thought of this, but I once accidentally sent Belial an email from my private account (back when I just started the blog and was still figuring this out), so he's sort of a ruined test case. Thanks for the thought, though.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Kelly [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Holy Shit! I had no idea. I just ignored that stupid buzz shit. I write about feminist issues too, and my rape story brings just as many fuckwits around. Going to disable now. Thanks for posting this.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Rune [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Great story it's rather sad to see this happening but it seems google buzz was switched on too fast. I managed to deselect the connection was reader and gmail but still was suprised to see my spammers becoming followers. It seemed desperate that buzz was launched untested google now need to get out of beta.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



LetsGetReal [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

You nailed it. So sorry this happened to you. Unfortunately there's very little chance Google will make useful changes based on your and other's experience. Super-crappy.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



B.Dewhirst [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

Google Buzz doesn't seem to quite work that way. Auto-following the people

described does not allow them to see anything until you post a Buzz.

Google gave you no reason to know this to be true, of course, but it didn't actually share everyone's private email to everyone else— it just showed you (and a bunch of other people) something that made them believe this was the case, which is pretty bad in its own right.

Plenty of f-ing up on their part, of course, but on the communications side of things rather than the disclosing privacy information side.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs [PERMALINK](#) *

February 12, 2010

I'm approving this after deleting hundreds of comments like this, since I've addressed this a few times already, and since most of those comments also included "u r stupid get raped."

In short form:

I opted out of Buzz when it arrived, but it still auto-followed.

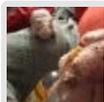
My "Contact" list only lists my boyfriend and mother as people who are approved for anything. Everybody else is on a separate list. This has always been the case. They were still auto-followed.

I never approved connecting ANY of my sites to Buzz. Reader and Picasa were connected automatically, without my permission or knowledge. My Reader and Picasa were private, by the way, but followers still showed up on my Reader (according to Google now, they couldn't read anything, but they were still there).

I never created a Google profile. I checked that again this morning to make sure I wasn't crazy, and I'm not. I never created a Google profile, specifically because I am so concerned with my privacy.

So! All future comments about, "Turn Buzz off," "Make your stuff private," "Don't approve contacts," "Make your profile private," "You shouldn't have approved Buzz in the first place" are to be deleted, because I DID ALL THOSE THINGS.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Harriet Jacobs [PERMALINK](#) *

February 12, 2010

As opposed to my blog account. My private account has my real name on it.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Marissa [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I'm so sorry this happened to you and I do hope google gets the crap sued out of them. Considering how hugely widespread domestic violence and stalking are, not to mention a whole plethora of other life-threatening possibilities with this, you are for sure not the only one in this situation and there could very well be people right now who have had their safety threatened and much worse. I really

hope no one has been hurt over this to lead up to a lawsuit, but shit, I still can't believe this happened and that no one thought about it and I hope google learns bigtime not to pull this crap. Even most of the sites I have seen expressing concern and anger about the privacy issue haven't really gotten that this is potentially life-threatening for large segments of the population. Anyways thank you so much for writing about this. This post is how I found out about it I changed my google settings to turn this crap off.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



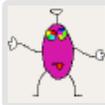
Harriet Jacobs PERMALINK *

February 12, 2010

Ostensibly.

Except I never did enable it. When it asked me to participate, I said no. It enabled anyway.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Greg PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

And that is bothersome because I have purposefully never created a facebook or myspace account because I decided it was too permanent. Now I get this.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



daveb PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

you can turn it off with the button at the bottom of the page i believe.. once it's off it's disconnected.

this has been a disaster for them..

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Rick and Geiah PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Thank you. Some one had to say this, and what you said and how you said it was perfect. We both thank you.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Gatwood PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Thank you for posting this. Your experience shows just how risky Google's privacy violations are. I hope you are considering suing.

My own privacy needs are less serious, but I'm still shaken and thinking of

boycotting Gmail.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



JeffreyY PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

That's not true, unfortunately. See

<http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=171460> for how to actually turn off buzz.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Mike PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I agree. Maybe you should check out zooloo.com where Privacy is as innovative and secure as the rest of the platform.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Mela PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Oh wow. My main beef about the privacy settings was that I'd been using Gmail to network and jobhunt. It was embarrassing to have Buzz bombard my professional contacts with follow req's and to allow them to access personal items. But at least I don't have any safety concerns –it was just embarrassing.

Fuck you, Google.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jiminy PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Hallelujah sister!

We should have never even switched from hotmail in the first place.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



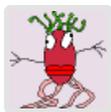
Mike PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

The really wonderful thing is Google's attitude towards privacy, nicely summed up by their CEO's quote: "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place" (watch for yourself: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6e7wfDHzew>). The first thought that popped into my head when he uttered this idiotic phrase was "what if someone is stalking you?" Google is an evil company run by self-righteous wingnuts who are convinced they can do no wrong because they are the "good guys".

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Matt PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

If you are really concerned about security and privacy, then you should take a look at ThreadThat.com. It is significantly more secure than any gmail or any email for that matter.

Like or Dislike: 0 0

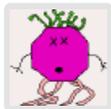


Earl Cooley III PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

More specifically, contact the Electronic Frontier Foundation (eff.org) for legal advice; they may be interested in your case.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



HopeSeekr of xMule PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Hi, your story is #3 on reddit.com thanks to the link I submitted.

http://www.reddit.com/r/technology/comments/b1bhy/google_buzz_autofollowed_a_womans_abusive_ex_who/

There are currently over 400 comments there.

If your site buckles under load, my reddit mirroring service has preserved a copy of this page for posterity and historical archival purposes at

http://www.redditmirror.cc/cache/websites/fugitivus.wordpress.com_b1bhy/fugitivus.wordpress.com/2010/02/11/fuck-you-google/index.html

Cheers!

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Lee Stacey PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

I think it's fair to say that you have a point.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



JasonD PERMALINK

February 12, 2010

Just so I'm understanding everything correctly, your privately shared items in Google Reader (not items marked "shared") and private Picasa web albums (not public albums) became accessible to anyone who Google Buzz noticed you emailed frequently and set to automatically follow you?

Like or Dislike: 0 0



fed-up [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

this morning i discovered that all my frequent contacts had access to my private Picasa albums and Google Reader that was also set to private. How is this legal? I specifically set these applications so that nothing would be shared and so that nothing was directed into the Public folder. I'm so furious. Now random work associates could view my post-surgery album and all sorts of private material. Outrageous. I have zero trust in Google. There is no way this wasn't an intended consequence of Buzz. Fuck Google.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Cobalt Blue [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

As a domestic violence survivor, this post has paralyzed me with fear. I routinely check out what information can be found out about me on the internet, and alerts like this kick me into a freaked out panic that doesn't help when I'm trying to learn about the new technology that's going to f*ck me over. Yes, he has shown up at the door, banging on it so hard that I had no doubt he was going to rip it off. Yes, he's gotten into my other email accounts (this was before I knew I could go after the provider). This is terrifying.

And somehow, in this digital world, when we are trying to make our own way (promoting our own business, for example), we have to put enough out there to make a living, but we also have to be very wary of the information we supply. The way google thinks, we should all be shut up in our houses and not reach out to anybody. We should always live in fear, apparently.

Like or Dislike: 0 0



Daniel [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I was not aware of this issue at all.. 😞

Good luck

Like or Dislike: 0 0



JasonD [PERMALINK](#)

February 12, 2010

I'm curious about this. How do you know that these private items became publicly viewable? I'd like to find out if my private items are publicly viewable, how can I find out?

Like or Dislike: 0 0



nmw [PERMALINK](#)

March 8, 2010

Harriet,

thank you for turning on the blog again!

As you may know, I have been very adamant about your right to free speech — and now that I see the comments that were all written pretty much as soon as this flared up (and also your more recent posts), I can begin to understand your reasoning for closing the blog down.

However, I also think you have a very supportive following, and I think you should not get too caught up with answering imbecilic comments. I see that your followers are rating these comments appropriately, and I feel that you can rest assured that these negative ratings speak volumes — and therefore you don't have to.

Please do consider giving me some feedback regarding both your concerns about this fiasco regarding your privacy and/or related freedom of expression issues (see also <http://censorship.posterous.com> 😊)

Apart from that, I can and would be honored to be allowed to support your literary aspirations, and also your expectations to be treated with the dignity that every human being deserves as their birthright.

And (but) finally, let me also raise my finger and note that you should not let your supportive followers down! Let them continue to support you, and do not allow detractors to discourage you from your inner conviction... to do the right thing!

😊 nmw

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0



Reply PERMALINK

March 13, 2010

Seriously?

Four people gave my post a thumbs down for saying that if you had privacy settings in place, you may not have as much to be worried about as you think?

I wasn't making any excuses, you shouldn't have to worry about it or take action to make things private (rather the opposite, you should have to take action to make things public). But that's how Reader works by default (at least...I think so...?).

But, well, whatever, I just figured if my observations were accurate it might be a relief, ultimately, to know that what YOU saw when you logged into Buzz might not be quite what OTHER PEOPLE saw and that OTHER PEOPLE didn't see much of anything.

I guess trying to contribute to the general level of knowledge about what really is and isn't visible and to whom it's visible is BAD and deserves THUMBS DOWN. BAD COMMENTER. JUST SAY GOOGLE EVIL.

Like or Dislike: 👍 0 👎 0



Harriet Jacobs PERMALINK



March 13, 2010

I wouldn't take it personally. The thumbs system is anonymous, so you never

know the intentions behind the ratings. You can't always assume that a reader with an opinion came in here to make ratings; often as not, it's a bunch of weird trolls showing up giving at least one thumbs-down to everything anybody writes on every post (which has happened, and I only know it's happened, because they announced it to me as if I ought now quake at the bad publicity). So, maybe somebody thought you were being a jerk, maybe somebody misunderstood, or maybe somebody was just thumbs-downing everything. When a big wave of internet goes by, you can rarely make sense of it.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Mark mason PERMALINK

March 17, 2010

I think the picture said the same thing.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Jack Yan PERMALINK

March 20, 2010

Harriet, since I was last here, **I got Buzz as well, despite not having Gmail**. This was a *week* after the bad press, after they supposedly wised up. Yeah, right. I also had 19 followers, 11 of whom were total strangers to me.

Like you, I am very careful about my privacy. It wasn't easy getting rid of Buzz (despite what Google claimed after that week's controversies). **One friend turned the service off, only to find his sister could still see his material**. I also discovered on February 18 that at the time, **Google did not have a privacy policy for Buzz**.

I can say for sure that your anger was not misplaced—I was amazed by ongoing privacy breaches, not just with Buzz, but other aspects of Google's services.

Like or Dislike:  1  0



Tessi PERMALINK

March 28, 2010

I was going to sign up for gmail but a while back I remember people telling me not to, but no one could remember why. I'm glad I read this entry! (I googled "Why you shouldnt get a gmail account")

Thank you for the heads up. I used to think I was paranoid or overly cautious, and this just confirms why I am or should be.

Thank you also for being so candid and honest in your writing. You've got yourself a new reader 😊

Like or Dislike:  0  0



wilco PERMALINK

April 2, 2010

With Google becoming more and more evil day by day, I stopped using most of their services years ago (yes, years). But one service I could not stop using was all

those gmail stuff, so I kept that up. Fortunately, I was able to pre-emptively block Buzz before it could be enabled. Thank goodness.

Nevertheless, I've gone back to using my backup non-Google email provider more and more.

The bigger Google gets, the more I hate it. And all because Google's business models relies upon advertising to generate revenue for Google's coffers. I hate ads, which is why I don't watch TV anymore. Ad blockers are great. I just wish someone could make one that blocks Google.

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Zelitel PERMALINK

April 3, 2010

Oh boy.

Hope everything is going to be alright. This is quite a bit scary...

Like or Dislike:  0  0



Carla PERMALINK

April 6, 2010

I also wonder if a lawsuit isn't in order. Google is a big company. They should know better than this. Unfortunately though, I fear that privacy online is pretty much a thing of the past with <http://www.dirtyphonebook.com> posting everybody's number and personal information online and sites like <http://www.unvarnished.com> that post personal reviews about your workplace performance. It's a scary and different world we inhabit today as compared to the world that our parents and grandparents grew up in. But I wonder if ultimately it might not lead to a change for the better as peoples sins are exposed over the long run.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

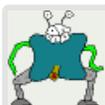


4proof PERMALINK

April 13, 2010

I love these types of little updates they change the pace of things... much needed. Good job and thanks

Like or Dislike:  0  0



sick of all this PERMALINK

April 22, 2010

Hmmm, it really seems like the only thing I can do to avoid many of these problems is to have something like 3 or 4 or 5 email accounts and each aspect of your life is truly segregated to its own email account and none of these accounts have any contact with each other. It sure makes things more complicated this way.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

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