



## Facebook's Zuckerberg Says The Age of Privacy is Over

By [Marshall Kirkpatrick](#) [www.readwriteweb.com](http://www.readwriteweb.com)

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg told a live audience that **if he were to create Facebook again today, user information would by default be public, not private as it was for years until the company dramatically changed their policy.**

**Your name, profile picture, gender, current city, networks, Friends List, and all the pages you subscribe to are now publicly available information on Facebook. This means everyone on the web can see it; it is searchable.** I'll post Zuckerberg's sentences on their own first, then follow up with the questions they raise in my mind.

Zuckerberg - **People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time.**

**"We view it as our role in the system to constantly be innovating and be updating what our system is to reflect what the current social norms are.**

**"A lot of companies would be trapped by the conventions and their legacies of what they've built, doing a privacy change - doing a privacy change for 350 million users is not the kind of thing that a lot of companies would do. But we viewed that as a really important thing, to always keep a beginner's mind and what would we do if we were starting the company now and we decided that these would be the social norms now and we just went for it."**

### **That's Not a Believable Explanation**

**This is a radical change from the way that Zuckerberg pounded on the importance of user privacy for years. That your information would only be visible to the people you accept as friends was fundamental to the DNA of the social network that hundreds of millions of people have joined over these past few years. Privacy control, he told me less than 2 years ago, is "the vector around which Facebook operates."**

Perhaps the new privacy controls will prove sufficient. Perhaps Facebook's pushing our culture away from privacy will end up being a good thing. The way the company is going about it makes me very uncomfortable, though, and some of the changes are clearly bad. **It is clearly bad to no longer allow people to keep the pages they subscribe to private on Facebook.**

This major reversal, backed-up by superficial explanations, makes me wonder if Facebook's changing philosophies about privacy are just convenient stories to tell while the company shifts its strategy to exert control over the future of the web.

### **Facebook's Different Stories**

First the company kept user data siloed inside its site alone, saying that a high degree of user privacy would make users comfortable enough to share more information with a smaller number of trusted people.

Now that it has 350 million people signed up and connected to their friends and family in a way they never have been before - now Facebook decides that the initial, privacy-centric, contract with users is out of date. That users actually want to share openly, with the world at large, and incidentally (as Facebook's Director of Public Policy Barry Schnitt [told us in December](#)) that it's time for increased page views and advertising revenue, too.

### **The Flimsy Evidence**

What makes Facebook think the world is becoming more public and less private? Zuckerberg cites the rise of blogging "and all these different services that have people sharing all this information." That last part must mean Twitter, right? But blogging is tiny compared to Facebook! It's made a big impact on the world, but only because it perhaps doubled or tripled the small percentage of people online who publish long-form text content. Not very many people write blogs, almost everyone is on Facebook.

Facebook's Barry Schnitt [told us](#) that he too believes the world is becoming more open and his evidence is Twitter, MySpace, comments posted to newspaper websites *and the rise of Reality TV*.

But Facebook is bigger and is growing much faster than all of those other things. [Do they really expect us to believe that the popularity of reality TV is evidence that users want their Facebook friends lists and fan pages made permanently public?](#)

The company's justifications of the claim that they are reflecting broader social trends just aren't credible. A much more believable explanation is that Facebook wants user information to be made public and so they "just went for it," to use Zuckerberg's words from yesterday.

### **This is Very Important**

Facebook allows everyday people to share the minutiae of their daily lives with trusted friends and family, to easily distribute photos and videos - if you use it regularly you know how it has made a very real impact on families and social groups that used to communicate very infrequently. Accessible social networking technology changes

communication between people in a way similar to if not as intensely as the introduction of the telephone and the printing press. It changes the fabric of peoples' lives together. 350 million people signed up for Facebook under the belief their information could be shared just between trusted friends. Now the company says that's old news, that people are changing. I don't believe it.

I think Facebook is just saying that because that's what it wants to be true.

Whether less privacy is good or bad is another matter, the change of the contract with users based on feigned concern for users' desires is offensive and makes any further moves by Facebook suspect.



## Looking at the Effect of FaceBook on Face to Face Communication Skills

### Positive Impact of FaceBook

Social networking can enrich social lives for those separated from family and friends by long distances, bringing them together despite the physical separation. This has recently come to light in the number of people in the armed forces using YouTube, FaceBook and Twitter to stay in touch.

Online communication can help those with [dysfunctional syndromes](#) achieve a level of social interaction previously difficult or impossible.

Such sites also provide those [isolated by disability or environment](#) with a rich and fulfilling social life. For anyone who is unable to leave their own house, social networking has provided a great way to get in touch with people who have similar issues, as well as allowing them to stay in touch with existing networks of friends.

Finally, social networking sites [can bring people together with varying backgrounds who might otherwise never have met](#), and then encourage them to extend that experience into real world social functions.

### Negative Impact of FaceBook

[Electronic interaction displaces the social interaction](#), keeping people apart – it is so convenient that people lack the drive to actually interact face to face. People are social animals, in the main, and removing that pillar can actually affect their social development, especially if started at a young age.

The lack of face to face communication undermines skills such as reading body language and other indirect communication facilities.

## **On Balance : How Should FaceBook Be Used?**

As with other enabling technologies, such as email, web search engines, and online publishing outlets like Wikipedia, the overall message is that, [in moderation, Facebook and other networking sites are a good thing.](#)

However, [relying exclusively on electronic communication for social interaction is likely to damage rather than enrich lives.](#) Everyone, at some point, with very few exceptions, needs the face to face contact in order to maintain their social skills.

Read more at Suite101: [FaceBook : Good or Bad for Communication: Looking at Effect of FaceBook on Face to Face Communication Skills](http://www.suite101.com/content/facebook-good-or-bad-for-communication-a121387#ixzz11aiSdvKo) <http://www.suite101.com/content/facebook-good-or-bad-for-communication-a121387#ixzz11aiSdvKo>



## **Comments on the dangers:**

Everything about you can and usually is put on Facebook - your address, phone number, email address, age, sex, pictures, personal trivia- such as "I'm going to Paris in December for two weeks to take part in an event. "

**YOU JUST TOLD THE WORLD THAT YOUR HOUSE/HOME/APARTMENT IS RIPE FOR ROBBERY.**

"I'm single and lonely" or "I'm recently divorced"- **RIPE FOR RAPISTS AND CON ARTISTS**

TELLING ALL to what you think are your "friends" is really TELLING THE WORLD and leaving you open for bullying, opportunist, people telling lies about you - in other words **VULNERABLE** in an unfriendly society.

A new study shows [divorce lawyers](#) are finding Facebook to be a new and juicy mother lode of ammunition to use against the other side in divorce cases. [From the Atlanta Journal-Constitution:](#)

"Every client I've seen in the last six months had a Facebook page," said Ken Altshuler, a longtime divorce lawyer from Portland, Maine, who is first vice president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. "And the first piece of advice I give them is to terminate their page immediately."

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It's worth pointing out that any images licensed as Creative Commons images (whether on Flickr or other photo-sharing sites) are there for the taking--regardless of who the subject is. Not always comfortable, though, to stumble across a photo of yourself, though, especially as they're almost always taken out of context.

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Quote from President Obama

"Well, let me give you some very practical tips. First of all, I want everybody here to be careful about what you post on Facebook, because in the YouTube age, whatever you do, it will be pulled up again later somewhere in your life," Obama said.

A survey in June by careerbuilder.com found that 45 percent of employers used social network sites to research job candidates and that Facebook, which says it has 250 million users worldwide, was their site of choice.

Some 35 percent of the employers surveyed said they had found content on the sites that had influenced them to reject a candidate. Examples included inappropriate photographs, information about the applicants' drinking or drug use, or bad mouthing of previous employers, co-workers or clients.

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- [Senators See Privacy Problem In Facebook Plan](#)
- **(CBS) The Early Show** May 8, 2010 ... Joan Goodchild, senior editor of CSO (Chief Security Officer) Online, outlines on The Early Show

She says your privacy may be at far greater risk of being violated than you know when you log onto Facebook, due to security gaffes or marketing efforts by the company.

**Your information is being shared with third parties**

- **Privacy settings revert to a less safe default mode after each redesign**
- **Facebook ads may contain malware**
- **Your real friends unknowingly make you vulnerable**

**Is Facebook a secure platform to communicate with your friends?**

The potential for crime is real. According to the Internet Crime Complaint Center, victims of Internet-related crimes lost \$559 million in 2009. That was up 110 percent from the previous year. If you're not careful using Facebook, you are looking at the potential for identity theft, or possibly even something like assault if you share information with a dangerous person you think is actually a "friend." One British police agency recently reported the number of crimes they've responded to in the last year involving Facebook climbed 346 percent. These are real threats.

### **Do people really have privacy on Facebook?**

No. There are all kinds of ways third parties can access information about you. For instance, you may not realize that, when you are playing the popular games on Facebook, such as Farmville, or take those popular quizzes, every time you do that, you authorize an application to be downloaded to your profile that you may not realize gives information to third parties.

### **Does Facebook share info about users with third parties through things such as Open Graph?**

Open Graph is a new concept for them - they unveiled it last week at a conference. It actually is basically a way to share the information in your profile with all kinds of third parties, such as partner websites, so they can have a better idea of your interests and what you are discussing, so they can - as they portray it - "make it a more personal experience."

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Well, that is the business model - they are trying to get you to share as much information as possible so they can monetize it by sharing it with advertisers.

### **Isn't it in Facebook's best interest to get you to share as much info as possible?**

It absolutely is. Facebook's mission is to get you to share as much information as it can so it can share it with advertisers. As it looks now, the more info you share the more they are going to with advertisers and make more money.

## **It is not only sharing the information: Isn't there a security problem every time they redesign the site?**

Every time Facebook redesigns the site, which happens at least a few times a year, it puts your privacy settings back to a default in which, essentially, all of your information is made public. It is up to you, the user, to check the privacy settings and decide what you want to share and what you don't want to share.

Facebook does not notify you of the changes, and your privacy settings are set back to a public default. Many times, you may find out through friends. Facebook is not alerting you to these changes; it is just letting you know the site has been redesigned.

## **Can your real friends on Facebook also can make you vulnerable?**

Absolutely. Your security is only as good as your friend's security. If someone in your network of friends has a weak password and his or her profile is hacked, he or she can now send you malware, for example. There is a common scam called a 419 scam, in which someone hacks your profile and send messages to your friends asking for money - claiming to be you - saying, "Hey, I was in London, I was mugged, please wire me money." People fall for it. People think their good friend needs help - and end up wiring money to Nigeria.

## **A lot of websites we use display banner ads, but do we have to be wary of them on Facebook?**

Absolutely: Facebook has not been able to screen all of its ads. It hasn't done a great job of vetting which ads are safe and which are not. As a result, you may get an ad in your profile when you are browsing around one day that has malicious code in it. In fact, last month there was an ad with malware that asked people to download antivirus software that was actually a virus.

## **Is too big a network of friends dangerous?**

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## **Is too big a network of friends dangerous?**

You know people with a lot of friends, 500, 1000 friends on Facebook? What is the likelihood they are all real? There was study last year that concluded that 40 percent of all Facebook profiles are fake. They have been set up by bots or impostors. If you have 500 friends, it is likely there is a percentage of people you don't really know and you are sharing a lot of information with them, such as when you are on vacation, your

children's pictures, their names. Is this information you really want to put out there to people you don't even know?

## PERSONAL DISCLOSURES ARE A PERIL TO YOU

For this they divided **the personal information on Facebook in 3 categories**: personal identity information (gender, birth day, birth year, email, and picture), sensitive personal information (email, employer, job position, status, mini-feed, regular wall, picture, photo albums, self-selected photos, tagged photos, message, poke, send a gift, and friends viewable) and potentially stigmatizing information (religious view, political views, birth year, sexual orientation, photos, friends viewable, interests, activities, favorite music, favorite movies, favorite TV shows, favorite books, favorite quotes).

Using facebook for **finding a new relationship** is probably accompanied by a high threat of identity theft and other social risks, so take care.

