

Apple and its Apparent War on Privacy - The Story Continues

September 7, 2021 - Over the past month we've done two stories on Apple. Early last month the company announced that it would start scanning its customers devices to root out child pornography. While that is certainly a laudable goal, invading the privacy of millions of innocent people to root out a few perverts is akin to using a sledge hammer to kill a fly. Not only is it a bad idea, it also creates a slippery slope upon which the company has intentionally engineered a back door to its devices. It's a privacy compromise that can be expanded at will to root out other perceived evils such as "thought crimes."

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The blow back against Apple didn't just come from us. Just about every organization concerned with privacy had something negative to say about the plan, and that has been enough to get Apple to "postpone" their roll out of it. Notice that they haven't cancelled the plan though. They're now presumably looking for a marketing means to repackage the idea in a way that the public views as less intrusive. Good luck with that. When you pay more than \$1,000 for your iPhone, it should belong solely to you. The idea that a private company or a government entity should be able to peer inside the device like peeping Toms without a search warrant is simply unacceptable.

While the marketing geniuses at Apple attempt to figure out how to un-do their botched roll out of spyware, they've come up with another bad idea that just screams privacy breach. Digital driver's licenses.

You may think that sounds nifty and convenient, but hear us out first.

Apple is now partnering with states - eight of them so far - to come up with a digital version of driver's licenses that can be added to your device's wallet. They are also working with the TSA to allow their use for boarding of aircraft. Never mind that anything digital can be hacked! What could possibly go wrong there?

But getting beyond the terrorism angle, just think about the privacy ramifications of this move. All of a sudden, all of your most personal information including your driver's license number and other info, along with your credit card info, will be stored in a single place on your phone. While the same can be said for a physical wallet, at least that isn't online. And in this case that phone will be a device manufactured by a company that has announced plans to use privacy invading software on it already!

If that isn't enough to make you cringe, just think of this. If you have a digital driver's license and get pulled over, you'll then have to hand your phone to the cop that stopped you. There is just no way that I would be comfortable with that. Not ever!

According to their announcement, Apple wants to replace old style wallets that you carry in your pocket with digital wallets that are carried on your phone. We'd imagine that this is something that government would love. After all, it reduces costs and makes it easier to track you at the same time. But its hard to see how individuals benefit much from this. It may be convenient but what are we giving up in return for that convenience?

Apple is a company that has prided itself on privacy until recently. They've relied on privacy in their marketing for several years now. But the fiasco with last month's announcement about sweeping phones for child porn, combined with this announcement on digital driver's licenses are screaming out that something at the company has changed dramatically. And that isn't good for any privacy conscious consumer.

You can read Apple's announcement about the driver's licenses here.

by Jim Malmberg

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