

## Google To Begin Restricting Access to Some Files Stored on Google Drive - What you need to know!

December 21, 2021 - Earlier this year, Apple ran straight into a brick wall of privacy activists when it announced that it would begin scanning pictures on customer-owned devices. They said they were looking for child pornography. But if they had gotten away with their plan, there would have been nothing to prevent them from looking for other content that Apple alone could determine was "objectionable." As a result of all of the bad publicity, Apple was forced to put their plans on hold.

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(function() {  
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
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(function() {  
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;  
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';  
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);  
})();
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Apparently, none of that has deterred Google though. They have now announced that they are ready to start restricting access to files stored on Google Drive - their cloud storage solution - which they believe violate their terms of service. By default, that means that they too are starting to look at the files of their customers. And that means they are intruding on their privacy.

Regardless of their intent, both of these companies are crossing a line that they shouldn't. Cloud storage services are sold to people who want to back up their data for a number of purposes. Not to the least of these is to be able to restore their data in the event of a computer or system failure. Frankly, it is none of Google or Apple's business what people are storing on their systems. Unless there is a law enforcement investigation and a search warrant, there should be no question about this. But both of these companies seem to be of the opinion that, "Big tech knows best!"

Not only is that balderdash, it's dangerous. As we pointed out when Apple made their announcement earlier in the year, this is a very slippery slope and there are no rules or laws to govern this type of behavior. Today, Apple wants to look for child porn. Google is being more broad brushed (and vague) about what they are looking for. So what's next? Looking for opinions they don't like? Mean memes perhaps?

To be clear, Google isn't threatening to delete files that it determines - again, in their sole discretion - are "problematic." They are however saying that the owners of such files won't be able to share them or grant others access to them. And of course, they do have an appeals process, but that undoubtedly will involve some sort of human review. Translated, that means that if they determine that a file that you want to keep completely private is a problem from their standpoint, you're going to have to share it with them to prove that they were wrong in their determination. That kind of sounds like your privacy will be violated twice, doesn't it?

The bottom line here is that anyone who wants to protect their privacy shouldn't be using cloud storage from companies such as this. And given the low cost of personal digital storage these days, there is no real need to use such a company. Anyone looking to simply backup files can purchase an external 2 terabyte drive for around \$70; possibly less if you can find one on sale. And if you need something a little more advanced that will allow you to share data with others, you can create your own "cloud" starting at around \$300. A number of companies including Western Digital and Synology produce both the hardware and software for these personal clouds, and once you've done that there are no monthly fees and backups of data can be automatic.

by Jim Malmberg

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