

Zoom's Updated Terms of Service: Is Your Privacy Really Protected?

August 10, 2023 - Zoom, the widely used video conferencing platform, is making headlines again with its recent changes to the Terms of Service (TOS). However, there might be more to it than meets the eye. Here's what you should know.

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The controversial change Zoom made to its TOS was reported by Hacker News and caused an uproar. The report shed light on Zoom's policies related to training AI using user data. When they rolled out the new TOS, it allowed Zoom to use your video, audio, and chat data without your explicit permission, sparking concerns about privacy. But people weren't buying what Zoom was attempting to sell. So they issued a "reassuring" update to quell the backlash. They added a new line to the to the TOS which claims that Zoom won't train AI models using your audio, video, or chat data without your consent.

But users really need to read the fine print. While Zoom now claims to seek your consent for AI training, it still retains the rights to use your data for various purposes, including machine learning and AI development. And the TOS doesn't mention "Service Generated Data," which includes usage data and behavioral information. This data could still be fair game for AI training. So from our perspective, it's almost like their saying they won't use your data for AI training at the same time they have their fingers crossed behind their back. Just an opinion.

These changes raise some real issues for consumers and businesses alike.

Privacy Concerns Remain: The ability to use any customer data for AI training without the customer's permission is a real problem. This is especially true when you consider that AI is in the early stages of being rolled out. We have no idea what the implications of this change will amount to in five or ten years. And from the looks of it that isn't something that even Zoom has contemplated.

Business Concerns: Zoom is a communications platform for business. Confidential information is discussed and exchanged over it daily. What does this change mean for business confidentiality? And who will have access to the AI data that is generated? Can businesses really trust a platform that says they are going to use its customer data weather or not the customer likes it?

Zoom's history with promises made to its customers isn't spotless. In the past, the platform faced backlash for misleading claims about end-to-end encryption and sharing data with third parties. These past actions cast doubt on their current intentions.

We believe that it's crucial for Zoom users to remain skeptical and keep a watchful eye on the evolving landscape of data privacy. It may even be time for them to start exploring alternative communications platforms. As a consumer, your personal data deserves utmost protection, and as a business, your choice of platforms should align with both your ethical values and your business goals.

by Jim Malmberg

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