Data Privacy Expert

For the vast majority of people, the concept of cybersecurity is mainly focused on tips such as using strong passwords and not clicking on suspicious links. With Facebook now in the news headlines, the principles of basic data privacy are beginning to enter the equation.

One's personal data (also known as personally identifiable information or PII) should be protected as much as one's password. Given only three simple data points (gender, zip code and birthday) 87 percent of us lose our anonymity, according to a 2000 Carnegie Mellon study.

While it often seems that protection of our personal data privacy is beyond our control (think data breaches such as Equifax), individuals do have the ability to take certain steps to reduce the number of personal belongings that we hold in our digital house.

Basic Data Privacy tips

- Don't overshare: Use of social media has exploded over the past few years and it is more important than ever to reduce what personal information is provided. Not only could someone use this information to compromise you (social engineering or password guessing), but these free applications make their profit by selling your information to third parties, such as what we see with Facebook.
- Reduce your digital DNA: Leverage encryption applications or websites to minimize readable (cleartext) information that you do share. Some include: DuckDuckGo (Search engine that does not store your queries), Tor (Browser), Signal (Texting program), and a reputable virtual private network (VPN) application to encrypt your data as it moves through the World Wide Web.
- Remember, it never goes away: While several applications, such as Snapchat, started off giving the impression that your content magically disappears after 30 seconds, it is becoming clear that this is simply not the case. Our shared data lives on in perpetuity, whether because of the application database backups, screenshots by others, or by inclusion in the WayBack Machine on Archival.org.

Security is everyone's responsibility.
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