9 Steps Companies Must Take to
Ensure Data Privacy

Many Internet companies have extraordinary access to individuals' personal data – their actions, their friends, their preferences, their interests – and their most intimate secrets. These companies should handle this access responsibly.

Become Data Stewards

Act as custodians of users' personal data – protect the data, not just out of business necessity, but on behalf of the people who have trusted you with it.

Be accountable

Companies should be transparent about their privacy practices, adhere to their privacy policies, and demonstrate that they are doing what they say. This means establishing safeguards for handling personal data and showing they are being enforced, committing to periodic independent audits, and ensuring partners abide by the same standards. When something goes wrong, they should be transparent about what happened, do their best to contain the harm and provide those affected with remedies.

Stop using user consent to excuse bad practices

People should not be asked to agree to data sharing practices that are unreasonable, unfair, or hard to understand. Companies should not rely on user consent to justify their data handling practices..

Provide user-friendly privacy information

Companies should give people relevant, straightforward, concise, and easy to understand "in time" information about how their personal data is being collected, used, and shared.

Give people control of their privacy

People should be able to see when and how their data is being used. Companies should provide easy-to-use privacy controls and make privacy the default, not an optional extra.

Respect the context in which personal data is shared

Companies should confine the use of personal data to the context in which it was collected. They shouldn't allow unauthorized or unwarranted secondary uses of personal data.

Protect "anonymized" data as if it were personal data

Companies should apply basic privacy protections to "anonymized" data. This could mitigate potential harm if the data is later re-identified or used to single out particular individuals.

Encourage privacy researchers to highlight privacy weaknesses, risks, or violations

Companies should invite independent privacy experts to audit new services and features as they are being developed, and those audits should be made publicly available when possible. Companies should also encourage researchers to report privacy vulnerabilities or violations and provide an open, transparent process for responsible disclosure.

Set privacy standards above and beyond what the law requires

Companies should set the next generation of privacy standards.

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