ars technica
the art of technology

New face. Same Ars.
Learn more about how we're making Ars Technica even better than before.

Home   News   Articles   Guides   Journals   Search   GO   Forum   Shop.Ars   Emporium   RSS

Google named worst privacy offender in study

By **Nate Anderson** | Published: June 11, 2007 - 05:51AM CT

A new report puts Google in last place when it comes to privacy protection. Despite recent moves to anonymize server logs and other pro-privacy gestures, Privacy International called the company "an endemic threat to privacy."

Only Google earned the dismal "black" color bar from the group, which has just issued a report on Internet privacy that took six months to assemble (see the rankings [PDF]). The current report is preliminary; final results will be released in September.

Google to anonymize logs in a nod to privacy advocates

Introducing iGoogle: Google's Personalized Homepage rebranded

The report rated top Internet companies on privacy issues and distilled the various results into a single color bar. Microsoft was two ranks up from Google, earning a curry-colored "serious lapses" rating. Amazon scored one level higher with its yellow "notable lapses" rank, and eBay did even better, earning a coveted blue bar. No company earned a top mark, however.

In singling out Google, Privacy International said that it "witnessed an attitude to privacy within Google that at its most blatant is hostile, and at its most benign is ambivalent." This stands in contrast to Microsoft, which several years ago would have earned the worst spot on the list. But "in more recent times the organization appears to have adopted a less antagonistic attitude to privacy, and has at least structurally adjusted to the challenge of creating a privacy-friendly environment," says the report.

Google is taken to task for the usual issues: providing no way for users to expunge data, maintaining search logs that could contain personally-identifiable terms, tracking Google Toolbar users on the web, etc. But it's not just Google's policies that give Privacy International concern; the group worries especially about these policies being implemented by a company as large as Google. The report's authors admit that Google's low ranking is in part "due to Google's market dominance and the sheer size of its user base."

People are suspicious of massive corporations, it appears, no matter how non-evil they think they are.

Filed under: Google, Privacy International, privacy, Business

DIGG THIS   DISCUSS

Linux phone standards group to publish specifications **:Next Post**
BitTorrent site ordered to enable server logs, turn them over to MPAA **:Prev Post**

Pentagon e-mail taken down by hackers

Revenge of the Zune tattoo guy

From the Journals

Revenge of the Zune tattoo guy

The Zune tattoo guy, "mszunefan," has won himself the favor of Microsoft and a trip to Redmond to meet the Zune team and get interviewed by Microsoft's Channel 10.

+ READ MORE

Recent Features

24-hour test drive: PC-BSD

A review of wearable video displays for the iPod

Inside AMD's next-generation mobile architecture: Griffin and Puma

Santa Rosa comes to the Mac: a review of the new MacBook Pro

Ars System Guide: June 2007

OpenForum

USA Today: Apple marketshare 7.6%

Virtual Servers? What to pick?

What makes a Senior vs

OSI to take more active role in open source definition enforcement

Mono Silverlight implementation emerges after epic hackathon

Adelstein first FCC Commissioner to support 700 MHz "open access"

Trusted Storage now ready for your hard drive

+ VIEW MORE

Ars at WWDC: Video interview with Amit Singh of Google and Mac OS X Internals

Take-Two decides to delay release of Manhunt 2

SlingPlayer Mobile updated for Windows Mobile 6

Microsoft opens new tree-house office

+ VIEW MORE

Junior developer ?

Unmanaged code

One large UPS or each server with UPS?

Editor's Choice

Copyright coalition: Piracy more serious than burglary, fraud, bank robbery

AT&T willing to spy for NSA, MPAA, and RIAA

MPAA: We are committed to fair use, interoperability, and DRM

About Ars Technica I **Advertise** I **Contact Us** I **FAQ** I **Privacy Policy** I **Reprints** I **RSS Feeds** I **Subscribe**