

Twitter stores user iPhone address books for 18 months after scan

February 17 2012, By David Sarno

Twitter Inc. said that to help users find friends also using the service, it retrieves entire address book from users' smartphones, including names, email addresses and phone numbers, and keeps the data on its servers for 18 months.

After questions about the practice, the company said it plans to update its apps to clarify that user contacts are being stored.

Twitter's privacy policy does not explicitly disclose that the company downloads and stores user address books. The policy does say that [Twitter](#) users "may customize your account with information such as . . . your address book so that we can help you find Twitter users you know."

The [disclosure](#) from Twitter comes after another online social service, Path, came under fire last week for downloading iPhone users' address books without permission. Path's [chief executive](#), Dave Morin, apologized for the automatic download and said Path would correct it, but also mentioned that such processes were "industry best practice."

As with many online [social services](#), Twitter allows users to look for friends who are also registered users. In the case of Twitter's [iPhone](#) app, users see a screen noting that when users tap the "find friends" option, the service will "scan your contacts for people you already know on Twitter." The short description of the feature does not mention that it also downloads every entry in the [address book](#) and stores it.

Twitter's privacy policy notes that some categories of "log data" are stored for up to 18 months. The policy says log data can include information like a user's IP address, mobile carrier and type of phone, but it does not address contacts.

Twitter spokeswoman Carolyn Penner said in an [email](#) that the company is planning an update to the language they use in the mobile app.

"In our next app updates, which are coming soon, we are updating the language associated with Find Friends - to be more explicit. In place of 'Scan your contacts,' we will use "Upload your contacts," she wrote.

(c)2012 the Los Angeles Times
Distributed by MCT Information Services

Citation: Twitter stores user iPhone address books for 18 months after scan (2012, February 17)
retrieved 17 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2012-02-twitter-user-iphone-months-scan.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--