

Facebook's Zuckerberg got grilled, but nothing's really changed

April 16 2018, by Jefferson Graham, Usa Today

Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg made a big splash testifying to Congress this week about the social network privacy scandal, but in the aftermath, not much changed.

The big takeaway: Zuckerberg is still sorry, but no radical shift in business strategy was announced. Some senators are woefully ignorant about how the Internet works. The only real news was a hint of a possible paid version of Facebook. This would hypothetically reduce the privacy issues some critics have brought up.

Let's recap:

Facebook has admitted that some 87 million of its 2.2 billion users had their e-mail addresses, phone numbers and/or other personal information hijacked by a rogue app developer that passed on the information to a research firm aligned with the Donald Trump presidential campaign.

The social network apologized for the action, and said it would be stricter in how it allows data to be shared, and have clearer disclosures to the public about how Facebook uses our data, including by selling advertisers access to groups of people with certain profiles.

Tuesday and Wednesday, the 33-year-old Facebook CEO appeared before Congress and repeated these points, as well as tried to educate some senators on how the Internet works.

One of the more memorable exchanges featured 84-year-old retiring senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) ask, "How do you sustain a business model in which users don't pay for your service?"

"Senator," Zuckerberg said, "We run ads."

The CEO dropped hints that perhaps Facebook could one day offer a paid, more private version of Facebook, and admitted that regulation of his service was "inevitable."

Meanwhile, Facebook is still sending us reminders of where we went in March (I just got mine this morning), who we ate with, what businesses we like and suggesting new friends to spend time with.

Not much has changed, nor is it likely to—even after many of us went in and downloaded our data, to see just what Facebook had on us.

Analyst Jeremiah Owyang of Kaleido Insights says the event was "political theater," aimed at allowing Zuckerberg to make amends with the public and the media.

"There is now greater awareness to the incredible influence Facebook has across the globe," he says. "And now that the Congress has put forth their grievances, this will set them up to do regulation."

He expects to see some some sort of new laws that call for Facebook to be more public about it how is uses our data, and require the network to ask our permission to do so and often. This is as opposed to having a terms of service that nobody reads and simply clicks OK on.

My own takeaway is a contrarian view. The average person doesn't care about the privacy brouhaha and despite high profile celebrities like Cher and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak calling to delete Facebook, most

won't. They love it and have continued to use it everyday. As I asked on a Talking Tech podcast earlier this week: "Can we go back to loving Facebook again now?"

Meanwhile, in other tech news this week:

Gmail will be getting a new look. The desktop version of the world's most popular e-mail program will add several new features, including the ability to put a time limit on the sent e-mail, like disappearing photos from Snapchat. The new features are expected to be unveiled in May at the Google I/O developer conference.

Apple introduced new Red versions of iPhone 8 and 8 Plus: The Red editions donate a portion of the proceeds to help combat AIDS. The phones are priced similarly to the standard models, starting at \$699 and \$799.

Uber risks penalties: The Federal Trade Commission is strengthening its settlement with Uber over a 2016 breach in which tens of millions of Uber riders and drivers' data was accessed. This new agreement adds tougher requirements to a settlement the agency and ride-hailing company reached in August 2017 over a 2014 breach involving bank information and Social Security numbers for more than 100,000 Uber drivers.

Hulu and Spotify team up for a joint subscription: The TV and unlimited music subscription services can be picked up together now for \$12.99 monthly, versus \$7.99 for Hulu (with ads) and \$9.99 for Spotify, a savings of \$4.99 monthly.

This week's Talking Tech podcasts

Best apps for making international calls: My friend Beth just visited

Asia, and asked about how to make calls overseas. She's the inspiration for this episode of Talking Tech.

Can we go back to loving Facebook again? Our post Facebook comes to Capital Hill discussion.

How to sort through vacation photos? Another listener inspired edition of the podcast, with the question from Ellen Kubo. How to edit those mountains of travel photos? (We snapped 3,000 in Hawaii last week—and got it down to 90.) Listen in to hear how we did it.

What Amazon will do with Ring video doorbell. After spending \$1 billion to purchase the scrappy doorbell maker, Amazon is set to boost the business. We tell how, on this edition of Talking Tech.

HomePod making sour notes for Apple. The iPhone maker's answer to Alexa costs more than three times the price of an Echo and yes, it works with Siri, but not 100%. We explain the issues.

The Talking Tech newsletter was back on the island of Kauai earlier in the week. We say aloha to today's edition with my collection of time-lapse footage of Hawaiian sunrises and sunsets.

Thanks for visiting with us again for the weekend tech news roundup. Be sure to check out the daily #TalkingTech podcast on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, iHeartRadio or wherever you listen to podcasts.

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