

Facebook asks big banks to share customer details

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Reports Facebook has asked banks to provide information about users' financial transactions has raised eyebrows given the social network's track record on sharing private information

Facebook has asked major US banks to share customer data to allow it to

develop new services on the social network's Messenger texting platform, a banking source told AFP on Monday.

Facebook had discussions with Chase, JPMorgan, Citibank, and Wells Fargo several months ago, said the source, who asked to remain anonymous.

The Silicon Valley-based social network also contacted US Bancorp, according to the Wall Street Journal, which first reported the news.

Facebook, which has come under intense criticism for sharing user data with many app developers, was interested in information including bank card transactions, checking account balances, and where purchases were made, according to the source.

A Facebook spokesperson denied the social network had asked financial institutions for transaction data, according to a statement given to CNBC.

Facebook and Citigroup did not immediately respond to AFP's requests for comment, while Wells Fargo declined to address the news.

The goal was to create new ways for Messenger to be woven into, and facilitate, interactions between banks and customers, according to the reports. The smartphone texting service boasts 1.3 billion users.

JPMorgan Chase spokeswoman Patricia Wexler directed AFP to a statement given to the Wall Street Journal saying, "We don't share our customers' off-platform transaction data with these platforms and have had to say 'No' to some things as a result."

Privacy worries

Facebook has been maneuvering to make money from Messenger by making it a preferred way for businesses and customers to tend to purchases, delivery confirmation, complaints and more.

But word Facebook is fishing for financial information comes amid concerns it has not vigilantly guarded private information.

Facebook acknowledged last month that it was facing multiple inquiries from US and British regulators about a scandal involving the British consultancy Cambridge Analytica.

In Facebook's worst ever public relations disaster, it admitted that up to 87 million users may have had their data hijacked by Cambridge Analytica, which was working for US President Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in May he was rolling out privacy controls demanded by European regulators to Facebook users worldwide because "everyone cares about privacy."

The social network is now looking at cooler growth following a years-long breakneck pace. Shares in Facebook plummeted last week, wiping out some \$100 billion, after the firm missed quarterly revenue forecasts and warned growth would be far weaker than previously estimated.

Shares in the social network have regain some ground, and were trading up 3.6 percent to \$184.24 in mid-day trading on Monday.

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