



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on March 27, 2018

Facebook Under Fire: Users and Investors Leaving

Following the news of Facebook's data breach that allowed political manipulation of the 2016 election, the social media giant is facing a steady stream of criticism from a variety of sources. Facebook has been called out for the data breach that compromised millions of users, allowing their votes to be manipulated. In particular, the criticism is focused not so much on the breach as on the personal data that Facebook collects on users in the first place.



Some of the people criticizing Facebook are well-known heavy hitters in the tech world. For instance, last Tuesday, Brian Acton — who founded the encrypted messaging app WhatsApp — [tweeted](#), “It is time. #deletefacebook.” And on March 17, NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden put Facebook's claims of being the innocent victims in all of this into perspective when he [tweeted](#), “Facebook makes their money by exploiting and selling intimate details about the private lives of millions, far beyond the scant details you voluntarily post. They are not victims. They are accomplices.” Snowden followed that tweet with another, [saying](#), “Businesses that make money by collecting and selling detailed records of private lives were once plainly described as ‘surveillance companies.’ Their rebranding as ‘social media’ is the most successful deception since the Department of War became the Department of Defense.”

While Snowden's tweets address the heart of the issue, i.e., that most of what passes for social media is really just what this writer refers to as “surveillance as a feature,” Acton's call for people to delete their Facebook accounts is telling. In 2014, Acton was involved in selling WhatsApp to Facebook for \$19 billion. He held 20 percent ownership in the company at that time, so his share of the sale — paid out in cash and stock options — was something approaching \$4 billion. He continued to work at WhatsApp after the sale, leaving last year to help Signal founder Moxie Marlinspike found the Signal Foundation.

Signal is a competitor of WhatsApp. Since Signal is built on open-source software to accomplish zero-knowledge, end-to-end encryption of texts, voice calls, and video calls, WhatsApp actually uses Signal's technology to power WhatsApp services. Acton invested \$50 million in the Signal Foundation. At the launch of the foundation, Marlinspike said, “Brian left WhatsApp and Facebook last year, and has been thinking about how to best focus his future time and energy on building nonprofit technology for public good,” adding, “The addition of Brian brings an incredibly talented engineer and visionary with decades of experience building successful products to our team.”

That Facebook is taking a well-deserved beating over the leaked personal data of more than 50 million users is obvious. The market responded by shareholders dumping their stocks. In fact, Reuters reported and [tweeted](#) on March 19 that Facebook shares are “down 5.6 percent” and the social media giant is “set to lose over \$30 billion in market value if losses hold.”

The popularity of #deletefacebook, and the downward direction of Facebook's financials, have already caused *Newsweek* to speculate whether this is “[the end of the social network](#).” That is not such a far-fetched question.



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So while lawmakers on both sides of the pond are demanding that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg (shown) appear before committees as they consider legislation to regulate social media (and Zuckerberg has said he favors some regulation), the free market is already dealing with Facebook without any assistance from government.

In fact, when Acton tweeted it is time to #deletefacebook, tech magnate Elon Musk responded sarcastically, "What's Facebook?" When another twitter user pointed out that Musk's SpaceX project had a Facebook page, Musk replied that he "didn't realize there was one" and that he would delete it. He then deleted both the SpaceX page and the page for the electric car company, Tesla, which he founded.

Since social-media sites gain credibility from the exposure offered by famous people and companies who use those sites, the deletion of accounts may matter as much as the dumping of stocks. If this evolves into an exodus, the result could be a one/two combination of stock dumping and page deleting that would be so connected that it would be hard to tell which is the chicken and which is the egg.

An example of this is the fact that the Facebook pages for SpaceX and Tesla each had more than 2 million "likes." That means that the millions of people who were following those pages will have to look to other platforms for news about those companies.

As this continues to take off, #deletefacebook is trending on Twitter, which seems only too happy to make the most of it.

And while Twitter is enjoying its day in the sun over all of this, the truth is that the company collects the same type of data as Facebook. The only difference is that Twitter hasn't been hit with a data breach. Yet. That we know of. But since the Facebook breach was in 2014 and only came to light because Cambridge Analytica founder Christopher Wylie blew the whistle on what he calls "Steve Bannon's psychological warfare mindf*ck tool," it is not beyond the realm of possibility (or even probability) that Twitter users' data has been similarly used.

And there is the rub. The important point here is not that someone outside of Facebook got the data and used it to manipulate users; it is that — as Snowden said — "Facebook makes their money by exploiting and selling intimate details about the private lives of millions, far beyond the scant details you voluntarily post." That someone else got their hands on the data and used it only serves to illustrate that the data shouldn't exist in the first place. Facebook, Twitter, and other social-media platforms routinely use those platforms and the data they collect on users to manipulate those users. Part of that is about profits and part of it is about a political agenda.

And while many social-media platforms are "surveillance companies" masquerading as something else, the free market is already producing competitors that do not harvest users' data. One such platform is [Oneway](#) — a social-media site dedicated to free speech and being "human friendly." Part of that commitment means no data-harvesting. As Oneway founder Derek Peterson explained to *The New American*, there would simply be no way for his platform to be manipulated for any purpose, since there is no data to manipulate. "In a world of hackers, intelligence agencies, and corporations, privacy on the Internet is virtually impossible to guarantee. The only way to truly secure a user's data is to never collect it in the first place," he said, adding, "On oneway.com all we know about our users is their username, e-mail address, and what they publish publicly." In fact, "passwords are encrypted such that we can't even read them if we wanted to." This means that "there is no benefit to any government agency, hacker or company in acquiring our user data."



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Since even Oneway can't see a user's password, and the site does not collect or store data on users, it would even be possible to have a completely anonymous account. All a user would need to do is create an anonymous, encrypted e-mail address (I'm looking at you, [Protonmail](#)) using the [Tor network](#), never access that address outside of Tor, and use that address to sign up for a Oneway account. As long as the user — whether a journalist, activist, or average citizen who is concerned about privacy and anonymity — always uses Tor to access both that e-mail address and his Oneway account, it would be virtually impossible to tie that user to those accounts. And since Oneway doesn't harvest data, there is no data to be leaked.

Facebook could learn a lesson from sites such as Oneway. The free market may insist on it. As for this writer, I have been using Oneway for a few weeks now and — like so many others — the only reason I have even kept a Facebook account is to stay in touch with friends and family. Considering recent revelations, I am compelled to acknowledge that — all of my reasonable complaints about both the surveillance state and the culture of surveillance notwithstanding — I have maintained a relationship with a company that exists primarily to spy on me.

This is my tipping point. I have downloaded all of my photos and videos from Facebook and will be taking Acton's sound advice to [#deletefacebook](#). Come see me at Oneway. I am there as [radix_libertatem](#).

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