

# rocket.ly

( adventures + reflections ) : technology



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The name 'rocket.ly' was Maia's!

HI. MY

NAME IS

DAN.

You can

**be my**

**friend if**

**you want,**

or just

**follow**

**me.** Take

a look at

my

**professional**

**background**

or my

various

**open**

**source**

**projects.**

**Peruse**

**the**

**presentations**

I've done,

or even

**watch**

**one.** If all

else fails,

**read my**

**blog.**

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Monday

Apr262010

# Top Ten Reasons You Should Quit Facebook

Mon Apr-26 2010 | [Dan Yoder](#)



**Update:** *Due to the surprising popularity of this post, I feel I should be absolutely clear about my role as VP of Engineering for a Hollywood-based social media startup, **BorderStyle**. The opinions expressed here are purely my own and are not in any way endorsed by my employer. While I do not see our applications as directly competitive to Facebook, nor have I presented them as such, it would be disingenuous not to mention this.*

After some reflection, I've decided to delete my account on Facebook. I'd like to encourage you to **do the same**. This is part altruism and part selfish. The altruism part is that I think Facebook, as a company, is unethical. The selfish part is that I'd like my own social network to migrate away from Facebook so that I'm not missing anything. In any event, here's my "Top Ten" reasons for why you should join me and **many others** and **delete your account**.

**10. Facebook's *Terms Of Service* are completely one-sided.** Let's start with the basics. Facebook's *Terms Of Service* state that not only do they own your data (section 2.1), but if you don't

keep it up to date and accurate (section 4.6), they can terminate your account (section 14). You could argue that the terms are just protecting Facebook's interests, and are not in practice enforced, but in the context of their other activities, this defense is pretty weak. As you'll see, there's no reason to give them the benefit of the doubt. Essentially, they see their customers as unpaid employees for crowd-sourcing ad-targeting data.

**9. Facebook's CEO has a documented history of unethical behavior.** From the very beginning of Facebook's existence, there are questions about Zuckerberg's ethics. **According to BusinessInsider.com**, he used Facebook user data to guess email passwords and read personal email in order to discredit his rivals. These allegations, albeit unproven and somewhat dated, nonetheless raise troubling questions about the ethics of the CEO of the world's largest social network. They're particularly compelling given that Facebook chose to **fork over \$65M to settle a related lawsuit** alleging that Zuckerberg had actually stolen the idea for Facebook.

**8. Facebook has flat out declared war on privacy.** Founder and CEO of Facebook, **in defense of Facebook's privacy changes** last January: "People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time." More recently, in introducing the **Open Graph API**: "... the default is now social." Essentially, this means Facebook not only wants to know everything about you, and own that data, but to make it available to everybody. Which would not, by itself, necessarily be unethical, except that ...

**7. Facebook is pulling a classic bait-and-switch.** At the same time that **they're telling developers how to access your data with new APIs**, they are relatively quiet about **explaining the implications** of that to members. What this amounts to is **a bait-and-switch**. Facebook gets you to share information that you **might not otherwise share**, and then they make it publicly

available. Since they are in the business of monetizing information about you for advertising purposes, this amounts to tricking their users into giving advertisers information about themselves. This is why Facebook is so much worse than Twitter in this regard: Twitter has made only the simplest (and thus, more credible) privacy claims and their customers know up front that all their tweets are public. It's also why the **FTC is getting involved**, and **people are suing them** (and **winning**).

**Update:** Check out this **excellent timeline from the EFF** documenting the changes to Facebook's privacy policy.

**6. Facebook is a bully.** When Pete Warden **demonstrated just how this bait-and-switch works** (by crawling all the data that Facebook's privacy settings changes had inadvertently made public) they sued him. Keep in mind, this happened just before they announced the Open Graph API and stated that the "default is now social." So why sue an independent software developer and fledgling entrepreneur for making data publicly available when you're actually already planning to do that yourself? Their real agenda is pretty clear: they don't want their membership to know how much data is really available. It's one thing to talk to developers about how great all this sharing is going to be; quite another to actually see what that means in the form of files **anyone can download and load into MatLab**.

**5. Even your private data is shared with applications.** At this point, *all* your data is **shared with applications** that you install. Which means now you're not only trusting Facebook, but the application developers, too, many of whom are too small to worry much about keeping your data secure. And some of whom might be even more ethically challenged than Facebook. In practice, what this means is that all your data - all of it - must be effectively considered public, unless you simply never use any Facebook applications at all. Coupled with the OpenGraph API, you are no longer trusting Facebook, but **the Facebook ecosystem**.

**4. Facebook is not technically competent enough to be trusted.** Even if we weren't talking about ethical issues here, I can't trust Facebook's technical competence to make sure my data isn't hijacked. For example, their recent introduction of their "Like" button makes it **rather easy for spammers to gain access to my feed and spam my social network**. Or how about **this gem for harvesting profile data**? These are just the latest of a series of Keystone Kops mistakes, such as **accidentally making users' profiles completely public**, or the **cross-site scripting hole that took them over two weeks to fix**. They either don't care too much about your privacy or don't really have very good engineers, or perhaps both.

**3. Facebook makes it incredibly difficult to truly delete your account.** It's one thing to make data public or even mislead users about doing so; but where I really draw the line is that, once you decide you've had enough, it's **pretty tricky to really delete your account**. They make no promises about deleting your data and every application you've used may keep it as well. On top of that, account deletion is incredibly (and intentionally) confusing. When you go to your account settings, you're given an option to *deactivate* your account, which turns out not to be the same thing as deleting it. Deactivating means you can still be tagged in photos and be spammed by Facebook (you actually have to opt out of getting emails as part of the deactivation, an incredibly easy detail to overlook, since you *think* you're deleting your account). Finally, the moment you log back in, you're back like nothing ever happened! In fact, it's really not much different from not logging in for awhile. To actually *delete* your account, you have to find a link buried in the on-line help (by "buried" I mean it takes five clicks to get there). Or you can just click **here**. Basically, Facebook is trying to trick their users into allowing them to keep their data even after they've "deleted" their account.

**2. Facebook doesn't (really) support the Open Web.** The so-called Open Graph API is

named so as to disguise its fundamentally closed nature. It's bad enough that the idea here is that we all pitch in and make it easier than ever to help Facebook collect more data about you. It's bad enough that most consumers will have no idea that this data is basically public. It's bad enough that they claim to own this data and are aiming to be the one source for accessing it. But then they are disingenuous enough to call it "open," when, in fact, it is completely proprietary to Facebook. You can't use this feature unless you're on Facebook. A truly open implementation would work with whichever social network we prefer, and it would look something like **OpenLike**. Similarly, they implement just enough of **OpenID** to claim they support it, while aggressively promoting a proprietary alternative, **Facebook Connect**.

### **1. The Facebook application itself sucks.**

Between the farms and the mafia wars and the "top news" (which always guesses wrong - is that configurable somehow?) and the myriad privacy settings and the annoying ads (with all that data about me, the best they can apparently do is promote dating sites, because, uh, I'm single) and the thousands upon thousands of crappy applications, Facebook is almost completely useless to me at this point. Yes, I could probably customize it better, but the navigation is ridiculous, so I don't bother. (And, yet, somehow, I can't even change colors or apply themes or do anything to make my page look personalized.) Let's not even get into how slowly your feed page loads. Basically, at this point, Facebook is **more annoying than anything else**.

Facebook is clearly determined to add every feature of every competing social network in an attempt to take over the Web (this is a never-ending quest that goes back to AOL and those damn CDs that were practically falling out of the sky). While Twitter isn't the most usable thing in the world, at least they've tried to stay focused and aren't trying to be everything to everyone.

I often hear people talking about Facebook as though they were some sort of monopoly or public trust. Well, they aren't. They owe us nothing. They

can do whatever they want, within the bounds of the laws. (And keep in mind, even those criteria are pretty murky when it comes to social networking.) But that doesn't mean *we* have to actually put up with *them*. Furthermore, their long-term success is by no means guaranteed - have we all forgotten MySpace? *Oh, right, we have*. Regardless of **the hype**, the fact remains that Sergei Brin or Bill Gates or Warren Buffett could personally acquire a majority stake in Facebook without even straining their bank account. And Facebook's revenue remains more or less a rounding error for more established tech companies.

While social networking is a fun new application category enjoying remarkable growth, Facebook isn't the only game in town. I don't like their application nor how they do business and so I've made my choice to use other providers. And **so can you**.

*Thanks to David Harthcock for creating the great "Ban Facebook" graphic.*

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#### REFERENCES (7)

References allow you to track sources for this article, as well as articles that were written in response to this article.

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at Frippes lilla värld on May-3 2010  
Intressant läsning på engelska om varför man bör radera sin Facebookprofil. Top Ten Reasons You Should Quit Facebook....
- Response: **10 Reasons To Delete Your Facebook Account**  
at BIEB Mobile Sources on May-3 2010  
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- Response: **links for 2010-05-04**  
at Michele Neylon :: Pensieri on May-4 2010  
United Country Dallas Auctioneers and Realty Craig Meier's auction business (tags: auctions auctioneers craigmeier) rocket.ly - Blog - Top Ten Reasons You Should Quit Facebook Goes into quite some detail about the ethical issues with Facebook (tags: facebook privacy security...)
- Response: **Reading Material**  
at UtterlyBoring.com on May-4 2010  
If the Empire's IT tech's wrote a blog, it would look something like this. Really nice HDR wallpapers. If I'm ever old and have a disabled parking permit, I'm going to be...
- Response: **10 weitere Gründe gegen Facebook**  
at Opinio on May-4 2010  
Es gibt unzählige Gründe warum man Facebook nicht verwenden sollte. Hier sind mal 10 davon, und das sind nicht immer nur die technischen: After some reflection, I've decided to delete my account on Facebook. I'd like to encourage you to do the same.

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READER COMMENTS (178)

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Who's William Buffet? I know who Warren Buffet is...

Apr-26 2010 | **John**

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@John: Um, yeah, that should be "Warren." Corrected.  
Thanks!

Apr-27 2010 | **Dan Yoder**

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Make it Buffett, then.

Great article.

May-2 2010 | **Mark**

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You're right that Facebook is self-interested and Zuckerberg has some questionable ethical qualities, but privacy isn't really a reason to leave FB as long as **DirtyPhoneBook** and others are posting ANYTHING they want to about ANYBODY. This unrestrained posting of peoples information to me is something that lacks in ethics and might harm a lot more people than what facebook is currently doing. You're also right about point #2, but that goes along with the so-called morality of Zuckerberg. They're obviously just self-interested.

May-2 2010 | **Anonymous**

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@Mark. Doh! Corrected. And thanks!

May-2 2010 | [Dan Yoder](#)

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Sound's perfectly reasonable - until "I don't like their application nor how they do business and so I've made my choice to use other providers." Because there are no other providers one could choose - or could you name some big-scale social network that is not driven by ad revenue?

May-2 2010 | [Till](#)

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You cite a Business Insider article .....

Business Insider is the biggest piece of garbage on the web. They are a parasite. They take other people's work and turn it into a bunch of slides to up their pageviews. Then they add a link back to the original content, so they can pretend their blatant plagiarism is ok. The very fact that you even read it says something about your intelligence. They are basically a tabloid for tech/business news.

May-2 2010 | [Smarter than You](#)

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While I am glad that you have left Facebook, I would like to point out that for everyone who still had FB since ~2009 is already in a world of hurt as far a privacy. The fact that they can claim ownership to anything that is posted to the site means that getting away simply means no more updates for them. There is no guarantee that your content will be removed from their servers or stolen by someone else at this point. How the masses are mostly deaf to this has always astonished me.

Great article. Hopefully some of my friends still on FB will read this and have an 'ah ha' moment.

May-2 2010 | [Jericho Kain](#)

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Compelling argument, but you kind hurt it with #9. you state he has a history of Unethical behavior but then you cite "These allegations, albeit unproven and somewhat dated," and only mention there have been "questions" of his behavior.

I'm not suggesting it isn't true, but when you back your other points with facts, why weaken your argument with hearsay. Anyone can start making allegations about anyone, but they may not deserve a second of thought. Is there somehow more than just hearsay and rumor here?

May-2 2010 | [Haacked](#)

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Your first point (10) doesn't hold up against the text of Facebook's TOS:

*You own all of the content and information you post on Facebook, and you can control how it is shared through your privacy and application settings. In addition:*

*1. For content that is covered by intellectual property rights, like photos and videos ("IP content"), you specifically give us the following permission, subject to your privacy and application settings: you grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook ("IP License"). This IP License ends when you delete your IP content or your account unless your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it.*

May-2 2010 | [Hang on there...](#)

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just having your name and dob listed for anybody and there dog to see classifies you as a moron. with that info alone, i can go on web detective and find out what you weighed at birth, and when you were potty trained.

May-2 2010 | [kelly](#)

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All very good points. Probably still going to stay through! it's too useful a tool. So many good people I know and the only contact method I have for them is facebook =[

May-2 2010 | [steve](#)

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In order...

#10 -- Facebook's TOS do not make them "own" your data. They have a license to use your data, and to sublicense that right out to other people. This is a LEGAL REQUIREMENT to run the service (you give them a photo, they need a legal right to give that copyrighted work to other people via the Web. It needs to be sublicenseable since like every modern web site, they use CDNs, which means they need the ability to send it to a CDN and say "you have the right to distribute this content as well". Their right to use the data ends the instant you remove the data, meaning they only have that distribution right for the amount of time that they need to do what you the user have asked them to do.

#9 - Allegations, in absence of convictions, are irrelevant. I can accuse you of being a pedophile. Does that make you one? No. Prove it, or move on.

#8 - Every web company is in the business of marketing information about their users. Any user who thinks "I'm the customer" is deluding themselves. You might as well

"Quit The Interwebs" if you're going to use this as a defense of a "Quit Facebook" movement.

#7 - That's nothing like a "bait and switch", in any classic sense. Perhaps you're unfamiliar with the turn of phrase, but it doesn't resemble this at all.

#6 - Didn't he violate their TOS by crawling the content? IF SO, then you reap what you sow.

#5 - You can use facebook without using applications. Folks do it all the time. Just give up Farmville FFS.

#4 - I know a lot of the technical folks at Facebook, and they definitely do have technical savvy. The thing you're perhaps unaware of is that NO system -- Zip, Zero, None -- is bug-free. Stuff happens, and the bad-guys are always finding ways around the walls the engineers put up in their path. It's a constant battle. If you want bug-free web sites, it's time to Quit The Interwebs.

#3 - This is more likely the result of someone never trying really hard (internally to Facebook) to walk themselves through that process. Sure, they're going to make it a LITTLE difficult, every organization does make it at least a LITTLE difficult to quit them, because they want to give you a chance to reconsider, etc., etc.

#2 - You mean they said to themselves, "Wow OpenID kinda sucks for anything other than authentication, we'd like something a little more robust than some crap that was Designed By Committee?" Blasphemy!

#1 - A lot of people tend to disagree. I won't claim it's perfect, I've got my share of complaints about it, but for "finding and keeping in touch with people from one's past", it does a pretty damned good job. Far better than anything that's come before it, that's for sure.

May-2 2010 | [Derek](#)

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@Till - There are plenty of options out there for social networking. The one thing none of them have, though, is 500M users. For now, I am encouraging my network to make more active use of Twitter. Nothing is private on Twitter, but at least they're out in the open about it.

@Steve - Just get in touch with the folks you want to stay in touch with and let them know you're leaving / ask for their contact info, if they don't otherwise post it. I've made a point (since well before Facebook) to make it easy to find and reach me anyway.

Regarding the TOS: technically, yes, Facebook doesn't own your data. For all intents and purposes, however, they do, because the licensing is so broad. And, in practice, even after you've deleted your account, they can still treat

anything you "shared" (pretty much everything you give them falls into this category) as still in play.

@Jericho: Thanks. That was definitely part of purpose of this post. I hope it works!

@Derek - Thanks for the impassioned defense. We'll have to agree to disagree.

Re: #9, when you run the world's largest social network, and the topic is trust, and you've settled a closely related lawsuit for \$65M - yeah, I think it's worth mentioning, even if the allegation is unproven.

Re: #8, I have no problem with companies monetizing user data. Just be up-front about your intentions. Waiting until you have half-a-billion users and THEN changing the rules is unethical.

Re: #7: I stand by my use of the term.

Re: #6: The point is that it was a bullying disproportionate response, not that Facebook wasn't within their rights to sue him.

Re: #5: I don't use Facebook at all, at this point. But lots of people do. And they aren't always aware that those applications can mine their "private" data.

Re: #4: I am a software engineer. I'm well aware of the challenges Facebook faces. I don't think they've done real well.

Re: #2: "Designed By Committee." You mean, like HTTP, HTML, CSS, and JavaScript? Twitter uses OAuth just fine. Personally, I'd rather support companies that realize that their success is largely due to the success of the Web itself and want to help contribute to that evolution, even if it means a little extra work to do so.

Re: #1: Yes, I've had my share of reunions via Facebook, too. Any social network that can attract that many people can serve the same purpose. However, that is value we, as consumers, add to the network, and we can choose those networks.

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May-2 2010 | [Dan Yoder](#)

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I was going to post this to my FB, but I see you don't have the button handy

May-2 2010 | [FB User](#)

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Why do I use anything that asks for my personal information? Be it Mint.com, Pandora, gmail, or facebook? The reason is that to me, their benefits greatly outweigh their risks. If you don't agree, that's fine, but don't be upset about it.

I will trade privacy for what I feel makes my life better. You don't agree, and that's fine. Enjoy your excel spreadsheet for finances, your personal mix tapes for music, your dedicated webserver for e-mail, and your high school/college reunions for catching up with friends. And rest easy because at least no one will know when your birthday is.

May-2 2010 | [Russ](#)

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I deleted my facebook account for at least 6 of the above reasons a week ago.

It's ok. So far the universe has not collapsed on me.

May-2 2010 | [david.yehaskel](#)

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Facebook terms of service section 2 states that YOU OWN your data. "You own all of the content and information you post on Facebook, and you can control how it is ... See Moreshared through your privacy and application settings."

Section 4.6 doesnt address keeping data accurate 4.7 does. And it only relates to keeping CONTACT information up to date. Its social media hows anybody going to find you if they cant contact u so I think that clause is quite relevant . Section 14 Every business deserves the right to sever relations with persons who violate the terms of previously agreed arrangements. I also have the legal right to reject patients and refuse treatment under certain conditions. The author seems like myself to have been a little naive about what it is that we all sign up for with social networking. we access these services at no cost yet it costs money to run a business. If we want social networking with privacy then we best be ready to pay for it and pay quite handsomely.

also actually i think termination of services, or contracts, clauses must be included in all legally binding contracts. else we would all be bound forever to the contracts we sign without the option of cutting loose and moving on. There must be a way to opt out of the agreement. whats worrisome with this author is the way he tied the three sections together in such a misleading way. the three sections are not so tightly bound as he implies with this sentence structure." Facebook's Terms Of Service state that not only do they own your data (section 2.1), but if you don't keep it up to date and accurate (section 4.6), they can terminate your account (section 14)." Quite unethical for him to mislead the reader like this. It puts the validity of most of his subsequent arguments in doubt .

May-2 2010 | [DuWayne Campbell](#)

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I use FB as a media for business. Personally, I do not reveal much about myself.

May-2 2010 | [Charmaine](#)

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Facebook delete button.

May-2 2010 | [Azman San](#)

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Sorry to double post. Here is the Facebook **delete** button again.

May-2 2010 | [Azman San](#)

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Mr Campbell,

You obviously read the above but don't really understand the implications. If someone has open ended sub-licencing and editing rights, then by any standard they 'own' it as much as you do. Whatever you post up there they can do as much with it as you can.

I find Facebook full of stupid 'poke this person' style apps, and have only left my account on it as I can't be bothered to delete it.

It's not quite as bad as made out here, but it's full of stuff of no value to me. I communicate to people on Twitter that I have common interests in (I don't go 'chasing irrelevant followers') and enjoy that. Facebook just irritates.

May-2 2010 | [WebKarnage](#)

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Dan,

Given the nature of the work which you are doing professionally, it'd have been nice for you to mention it along with urging people to leave Facebook:

(from your LinkedIn page)

We've launched Glass, our social media platform for private conversations that happen right on the Web itself (imagine a layer of Glass over the Web). We're still in private beta, but check my Twitter feed (@dyoder) for invite codes.

Just seems like something you'd want to put out there so that people can evaluate your claims in light of any potential conflict of interest / external reasons for making this post. In the interests of full disclosure and all that :)

May-2 2010 | [FullDisclosureFTW](#)

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WHY doesn't someone come up with a good alternative?  
There are obviously so many positives to Facebook and

people are reluctant to quit it even knowing the negatives.  
I'd even pay a fee for a good alternative.

May-3 2010 | [sharon](#)

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I agree with the large majority of what you're saying, but entirely disagree with your conclusion, and I also especially disagree with point #4.

It's a completely legitimate concern that Facebook will do things with your personal information that you don't want them to, and it's a completely legitimate suggestion to try and prevent that. Granted, they are unethical, shifty, business rather than user oriented, and a big bully. But I think we've seen this behavior before, from Apple (recently) and Microsoft (forever). The fact still remains that deciding to boycott both of those companies would probably be a poor decision. You could always use Linux, I suppose (I myself do), but that's not a viable option for many people. The long and short of this is that despite how horrible the implementation of their services may be, these companies provide enough value that you would be foolish to attempt and leave them in most situations. You might argue that Facebook isn't like Apple or Microsoft, you need them to even get on the internet, right? Well as Facebook's role in social interaction, and identity management expands, you'll find that the value they provide expands as well, and they will become indispensable. I suppose everyone is free to do as they wish, but at the same time you'll find most people unwilling to part with the value that Facebook provides them, for free by the way.

On to point #4 (and a little bit of #2):

Facebook is probably one of the most technically competent contributors to open source technology that exists today: [you can read more about that here](#). And I would wager that they will do a better job of securing their information with some of the brightest minds that our top universities have to offer backed by a billion dollar bankroll. You may be a software engineer, you may even be an extremely talented software engineer, you may even be a software engineer that is more competent than anyone at Facebook, but I guarantee you that you don't work under the same conditions that Facebook engineers do, and I guarantee that you aren't innovating and diligently applying implementation improvements at the rate that they are. Implementation improvements, I might add, that have the primary purpose of constantly improving their architecture, and a secondary purpose of giving back those same tools to the open source community. For example: Twitter had a big problem over the last few years, they were encountering issues with the scalability of their RDBMS, guess who's free technology they used to solve this problem? You got it, Facebook's! You're not painting a clear picture of how talented Facebook's team is, or what

exactly they give back: they are highly competent, and more than willing to contribute back to the community. Whatever issues they may have had pale in comparison to, for instance, many large banks and credit issuers who have leaked the full financial details of their customers by the millions. It's really naive to think that any company can grow from zero to half a billion users over five years and not experience significant growing pains, which in my opinion they have handled admirably.

In any case, yes Facebook is terribly big brother, and they do irresponsible things with their users' information, but why not just advocate for better education of their user base rather than trying to burn them?

No hard feelings but "OMG DELETE YOUR DATAZ NOW" is really not the answer here, if someone is taking the time to read this article and educate themselves about this, they could just as easily restrict the information they have on Facebook in the first place, and alter their privacy settings, without losing out on their ability to explore their social graph and keep in touch with / meet new people online.

Sorry if I sound like a Facebook advocate, I'm really not, I actually hate them probably as much as you do, but I also see the value in what they provide, and want to keep it that way. It's a bit of a struggle, but that is the nature of a changing world.

May-3 2010 | [Mike Riley](#)

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I also believe I should not use this for serious things. FB has made name this does not be taken as this is very trusted place for social networking or putting private data.

May-3 2010 | [Satya Prakash](#)

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but i still like FB. FB allow my business grows

May-3 2010 | [nagobonar](#)

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For the people who are looking for a good alternative to FaceBook: [Hyves](#).

Yes it's Dutch, but also available in English and with 10 million users already it has enough potential to become the biggest networking website in the world. Lots of options concerning the privacy of your profile, just a couple of clicks make your profile private, less private or open for the world to see.

All I can say is: give it a try ;)

May-3 2010 | [FBnono](#)

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@FullDisclosureFTW - Thanks for the suggestion. In hindsight, I should have been clearer about my own role in

social media. I've updated the post accordingly. In my defense, I was very surprised by the popularity of the post.

@Mike Riley - It seems a bit fatalistic to conclude that we are stuck with Facebook the way we're stuck with Microsoft or Apple. In fact, I would argue that we've had plenty of opportunity to learn from the past by now, and we need to stop supporting ethically challenged companies before they become "de facto standards."

They do not really provide their service "for free," either - you provide personal data in exchange for use of the service. That's sort of the crux of the whole problem - they keep changing the terms of the transaction. Consumers aren't used to thinking in terms of their data as a form of currency, but it's no difference in principal from a company that keeps increasing their monthly subscription fee, or suddenly starts using pop-up ads. Those changes are more visible and obvious and that's what is so insidious about what Facebook is doing.

As to the quality of their engineering, when you decide you are going to start storing personal information about people on a large scale, you sign up for the "growing pains." And I don't think comparing them to the abysmal record of banks in this regard is much of a defense. Okay, sure, they have better engineers than banks. Can we raise the bar a bit?

As to their open source contributions, they based their entire infrastructure on open source technologies, which they then had to improve in order to keep using them. They've done some great work there, but the fact remains that a lot of the privacy-related problems they've had were pretty ridiculous. And I still don't think you can make an argument that they are helping to further the Open Web.

And I guess the main point is, no one asked them to make such strong privacy claims to begin with. They signed up for it. I don't doubt Twitter might have had the same sorts of problems, but they never made the same promises.

I'd probably give Facebook the benefit of the doubt on any one of these things. I still used Facebook fairly regularly until the past couple of months, and I only deleted my account right before posting this. It's just the aggregate picture that finally made it impossible for me to give them the benefit of the doubt any more.

And, due to the nature of social networks, you can't just decide to stop using them. You have to convince your network to use something else instead, or you just end up withdrawing from the conversation, as it were. Even for people whose know better than to post really private information on Facebook, just using it makes it that much harder for other, perhaps more naive, people to stop.

At the end of the day, for me, I just would prefer my network move to Twitter (or wherever - they seem to be the most promising alternative), where the contract is simple and clear, their ethics are not as questionable, and they aren't trying to be all things to all people.

May-3 2010 | [Dan Yoder](#)

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@FBnono - That's the spirit! Thanks for the suggestion.

May-3 2010 | [Dan Yoder](#)

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Yeah, evilfacebook is (unsurprisingly) evil in numerous ways.

Annoyingly, there are people I want to keep in touch with who use it though. Although evilfacebook don't make it easy, it is possible to get friends' posts etc via RSS. You miss out on other people's comments, but isn't one of the basic rules of web browsing 'never read the comments'? :) More usefully you miss out on tedious 'I have given away my data' erm 'here's what I did in farmville' updates as well.

Googling for 'jwz facebook rss' finds the details of how to do this.

May-3 2010 | [Ian](#)

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Now is the question how to quit (remove my account and all my data)?

May-3 2010 | [Vladimir](#)

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CIA + mcdonalds = facebook

May-3 2010 | [gregorylent](#)

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Excellent post, amusing and scary at the same time...

I had my own thoughts about the actual supply for this Facebook Open Graph thing, and found it to be non-existent:

<http://www.martijnlinssen.com/2010/04/face-off-for-facebook.html>

Meanwhile, I found out that the actual number of Facebook users is somewhere near 250 million, according to their own stats - the calc is in the same post

May-3 2010 | [Martijn Linssen](#)

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You can always backup your account first with Backupify, and then if you change your mind later you are still good.

May-3 2010 | [Rob](#)

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You mean section 4.7 about contact info. 4.6 is no sex offender rule.

May-3 2010 | [Marcy](#)

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Way ahead of you, dude! But since I don't have a blog, I couldn't post anywhere about this (Since I had already deleted my FB account)

May-3 2010 | [Andrei](#)

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I've always had a disdain for Facebook but joined along because, well, everyone else was doing it. No more. Between these very valid reasons listed above and the fact that I hate, hate, hate the clunky UI, I no longer want to support it. Even if that means I will no longer see 1000 baby pictures a day from my cousins, or be invited to 10001 events in cities I don't even live in, or have to constantly turn down requests from ex-boyfriends from high school. I'm sure my life will not suffer much at all.

You know what finally did me in though (besides the asinine privacy and data policies of FB)? The lack of control over messaging. Why the F.U\*.K am I not allowed to turn off messaging? Yes, the invites are annoying, but what's worse is that certain people have decided to use Facebook messaging in lieu of business email and business calendar invites. Really, you are FB messaging me to tell me you are changing a business meeting from 11 to 1PM? Why? Also, why would anyone ever assume I just check my personal Facebook page like business email? But sadly, they do, and with no way to turn it off, I'm stuck with it, miss important business communications, or stuck telling a co-worker or client that they are using Facebook inappropriately when it would be so much easier just to be able to turn the damn messaging off. Grrr.

Rant over. Thanks.

May-3 2010 | [Lizzy Caston](#)

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Also, the way I am killing my Facebook page is this. I've posted that I'm killing the account and why on my wall and have stated that this is my last post. I've also stated I am killing it a week from today. This gives my friends fair warning and allows them to find me other places on the internet. Because I do have my own website that includes strong SEO, contact form and my phone# and email address, I'm pretty easy to find on the internet. I have set up a separate Facebook account under a well known nome de plume I've been using since 2006 to run a popular website in Portland, Oregon. I've linked this account to a new gmail account that contains zero privacy data and

contacts. I am using this account to manage my clients' facebook fan and business pages, and the fan page for the popular website I help run. Because I do use Facebook in my professional work I need a way to access it, but I'll be damned if I'm going to have any more personal connection with the the evil thing.

May-3 2010 | [Lizzy Caston](#)

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Great article.

May-3 2010 | [RP](#)

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I agree with all of you about that, for sure!

May-3 2010 | [Jam Handy](#)

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What is facebook?

May-3 2010 | [Mike](#)

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Deleted...Deleted....and Deleted.

May-3 2010 | [Fellow FB Hater](#)

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Very interesting points, thank you for this.

My question is, will it do any good to delete your account? Even if you actually delete (not just deactivate)--are you truly removing any and all of your information from their servers? I'm not too savvy with how all this stuff works, but if they "own" my data, wouldn't they still own it after I delete my account?

May-3 2010 | [JM](#)

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Bravo, Dan. Entirely well stated. You hit all my points on why Facebook is irrelevant to me. It mainly operates on lemming/mob mentality. Everyone's on it, so you should be too. Truth is the majority don't care as long as it works which is sad.

May-3 2010 | [Raymond](#)

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just my two cents

May-3 2010 | [TurboFB](#)

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But in Mother Russia, face books you!

May-3 2010 | [Yakov](#)

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I work from home and have friends all over the world and FB does allow me to feel connected. Having said that, I

agree with all your points. My question is - what's the alternative?

May-3 2010 | [Raul](#)

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Hello, Dan, and very many thanks for this article.  
Two million accounts of facebook are in Germany - compares to 200 members totally.  
[http://meedia.de/nc/details-topstory/article/bildde-vernetzt-sich-mit-facebook\\_100019528.html](http://meedia.de/nc/details-topstory/article/bildde-vernetzt-sich-mit-facebook_100019528.html) .

May-3 2010 | [emamedia](#)

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The alternatives? Perhaps some day:  
<https://www.mypirates.net/> or  
<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/196017994/diaspora>  
-the-personally-controlled-do-it-all-distr

May-3 2010 | [John](#)

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