

## **One-Click into the Digital Future**

I bought an Apple iPad recently. The iPad won't start up unless I have a PC or a MAC to download the latest Apple iTunes software to configure iPad. Clicking through the iTunes setup process, I was then required to establish a billing relationship with Apple. Do I trust Apple with my billing information? Did I have any choice? And why couldn't I just be able to transfer a bunch of MP3 music I already have on my PC to the iPad, without installing iTunes and signing up for an account with Apple? I am forever required to allow Apple to present and influence what music, video, and applications I should discover and buy. Allow Apple to monitor what I buy and like. In setting up iTunes, iTunes wanted to become my default music player replacing Windows Media player. iTunes updater began to ask me if I want to install Apple Safari browser as my default browser. Just because I bought an iPad, Apple wants to own everything I do not just on iPad, but also on my PC.

My wife recently upgraded her phone to a Motorola Android phone. To activate the Android phone, she was required to create a Gmail account. As the Verizon lady transferred her old phones' contact list, calendar, and other information to the new Android phone, the Verizon lady congratulated my wife that all her personal information were then automatically uploaded to Google and backed up by Google. Does my wife trust Google with all her personal information? Does my wife know that backup means that all her personal information had been sucked up by Google into an Internet cloud managed by Google? Did she have any choice? My wife uses Yahoo Mail for many years so how come she was required to open a new Gmail account? The Android phone is tightly integrated with various Google cloud-based applications such as Gmail, Calendar, Talk, Maps, search, etc.; effectively, my wife's online activities through the new phone is monitored by Google. Just because my wife bought an Android phone, she had to share all her personal data with Google, and began to attach herself to various Google services.

In today's digital world, with "one-click" acceptance of product license agreement, whether it's iTunes/iPad or Android phone, we agree to give up our rights and privacies, not even realizing it. Apple wants to own your entertainment data (music, video, gaming), while Google wants to own your contacts, emails, calendar, as well as know where you are going (maps) and what you are looking for and buying (search). Both companies are fighting to own more and more of our daily lives, without us knowing it.

My 6-year old and 10-year sons share a PC at home. Every month, I always end up spending hours removing various malicious software (malware) that they end up installing through their casual "clicks" online. Malware often get downloaded along with the free games and online promotions. Many malware try to change your default browser search settings and homepage, install search toolbars, and enable various pop-up advertisements. Often, they are collecting your personal information. It worries me that the vast majority of our digital population does not have a dad who is capable of fixing home computers; vast number of household PCs are likely infected with some form of malware. It concerns me even more to see various big search and advertising companies are knowingly supporting the companies building and spreading the malware so to benefit from the search traffic and advertisement eyeballs.

In today's digital world, with "one-click" download of a toolbar, our online activities is forever monitored and profited by others, without us knowing about it.

Internet has tied all of us around the world closer together. Over half a billion global users use Facebook today to share photos and messages with friends and family. It is simply a click of a button to share your personal information with the rest of the world. Sometimes, a sudden change of the social network policy or feature could expose all your personal information to strangers. There are significant risks when some of these personal information were to be put to the wrong use. It is also powerful and scary to have a company collecting so much information about users in a global scale.

Management team behind these big companies should recognize that they have social responsibilities. Revenue and profit growth can be achieved without sacrificing user choices and freedom. Success comes with social responsibilities, and success can be achieved without invading people's privacies. We need to create an open, yet secure world for our kids where they can enjoy learning, entertaining, sharing of knowledge and experience, and chatting with friends and family.

In today's digital world, a simple click could have huge implication. In one click, you might have agreed to allow iTunes to control your digital entertainment life. You might have allowed Google to index all your personal emails and information. You might have allowed a malicious software to install on your PC. You might accidentally share some personal information to strangers. Most users don't understand the implication of the click, but the management team behind these big companies do. It is prudent that we all respect everyone's rights for privacy and freedom of choices. We should respect and appreciate cultural diversities as we live in a global digital village. Let's make sure we do create a better, open digital world for our children to live in.

### **About Author**

Mark spent the past 18 + years in the technology industry. After spending 7 years at Intel, Mark started his a software company in 2000, and sold it to a public company in 2004. He is currently founder and CEO of DeviceVM, a software company with over 270 employees, supporting customers including Acer, Asus, Dell, HP, Lenovo, LG, Sony, and others. Mark serves on the Board of Linux Foundation, a nonprofit organization responsible for promoting and supporting the growth of open source Linux. Mark holds MS and BS degrees from MIT, and executive MBA from ASU.