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Part one: Synopsis

Walking in the halls I saw a poster stating that Alex Alben the first Chief Privacy Officer of Washington state was coming to WSU Everett to give a presentation. The presentation would be about what the state government is doing to help protect my privacy. Also included were tips and tools to help me secure my data at home and in the workplace. A bonus from the presentation was some of the history around privacy laws in the United States. After going to the event Alben I know now that he was able to peek my curiosity and give me valuable information on what I can do to protect myself against hackers, big data, and some unsettling statistics around Big data.

Your Privacy is Being Monetized

They know more about you than most of your close friends, family members, even lovers. On average they collect more than three thousand pieces of personal information on each one of us, and we are letting them do it. Who are they? The marketing companies that glean databases and sell our information to anyone. What can we do about it? That's what Alex Alben Chief Privacy Officer for the State of Washington is trying to teach people.

"I need more people to become aware of this issue," said Alben. "The problem is not that many people think about (it)."

The issue is keeping our privacy in a digital age is becoming more and more difficult if not impossible. Why because hacker's loose privacy policy's and big business selling your profiles to other companies for a profit.

However, Alex Alben the first Chief Privacy Officer for Washington state is here to spread the word by giving an informative presentation. Included in the presentation is, the history of privacy in America, the threats to our privacy along with few tips to save us from the ever-growing reality of having our privacy stolen from us.



Alex Alben giving his presentation on Privacy in the digital age of America at WSU Everett Photo credited: Austin Treherne

History of Privacy:

The origins of protecting your privacy don't stretch as far back as you might think. The first case of privacy law in the United States was in 1902 Roberson vs. The Rochester Folding Box Company.

Roberson was a young woman who had her picture taken. This was all fine. However, the photographer sold the young girl's photo to a company which then put the picture on their products. She found out about this and sued the company and won.

Thus, sparking the Civil Rights Law of Section 50 and 51 which states "Right of privacy. A person, firm or corporation that uses for advertising purposes, or for the purposes of trade, the name, portrait or picture of any living person without having first obtained the written consent of such person, or if a minor of his or her parent or guardian, is guilty of a misdemeanor." Concluding the first ever case and win on privacy law.

It took nearly 20 years and a major crime for more talk on privacy law. In 1928 the Olmstead case started. Olmstead was a wealthy man who made his money as a bootlegger in the Pacific Northwest, bringing alcohol from Canada and sailing it over to Washington state.

Olmstead was caught because of the first-ever wiretap. Back then you didn't hack into someone's phone rather you hid outside their window to listen in on what they were doing. Since federal agents had obtained these wire taps without judicial approval.

It was thought this was an invasion of privacy. Although the court ruled in favor of the federal agents, it still created public discourse of how far the federal agents can go before it is invasion of privacy.

The most recent privacy law case was Riley V. California, the was is about a young African American who was pulled over for having a tail light out. This lead to the cops searching the car and finding Riley's phone, the cops searched the phone and found out that he was linked to a homicide a few weeks back.

This case was brought up through the courts where a win for privacy was made in which the court unanimously held that with no warrant to do a search and seizure on the cell phones digital contents was unconstitutional.

Alben to wrap up this section stated, "We need more general privacy laws" continuing to say that these cases aren't enough for the public to start really talking about privacy laws.

Threats to our privacy:

Much of what threatens our privacy is so ubiquitous that it has become invisible to our eyes luckily Alben was able to identify what these privacy threats are.

The two major threats to our privacy is the government and major corporations.

The government has been mounting body cameras on police officers and their cars. Traffic cameras are being installed at every street corner and now we are on the verge of smart cities. Smart cities are urban areas that have been outfitted with electronic data collection sensors to supply information which is used to manage assets and resources efficiently.

This is an issue to you because of all of this is public record, which means anyone can ask for a public records request and pull all the footage from these recordings to use for their own reasons.

Secondly major corporations are continuously gathering our data, and this is allowed because we signed up with the terms and services. With data recording being allowed they can store every click we've done for years to be used as a consumer profiling byproduct.

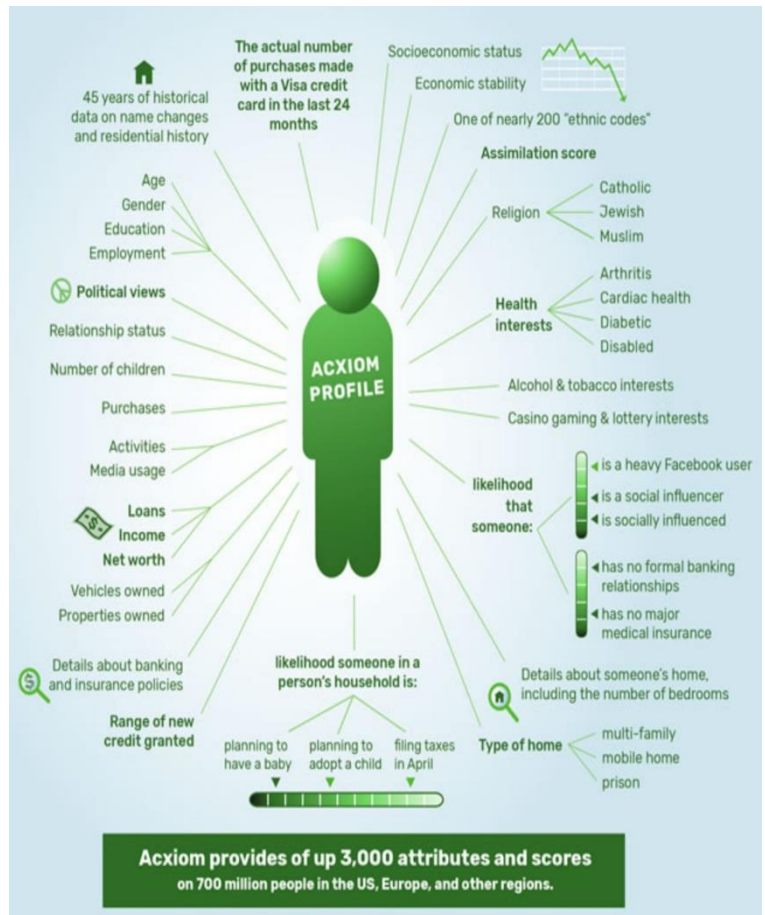
Even if you wanted them to delete your information it's almost impossible now, Alben stated that "it became more expensive to delete data rather than to just store it in servers."

To make things worse Alben said that much of the data collected has been hacked, releasing millions of individual profiles for the hacker to sell.

Tips for Protecting your privacy:

Luckily not all hope is lost a few tips, Alden gave were read privacy policies inside the terms of service and if you don't like the terms then opt out of using that website. Another tip he gave was to always have a password on any electronic device that has an I.P address on it.

Data collecting has been going on since the 1990's and continues to grow into 2018. Alben was asked how will he be able to combat data collecting he restated, "I need more people to become aware of (privacy law issues) the problem is not that many people think about" he goes on to say, "(data collecting) will get worse before it gets better."



Axiom infographic of what they know about you. Courtesy photo from Google