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## Uber Hid Security Breach Impacting 57 Million People, Paid Off Hackers

from the *not-good,-uber,-not-good dept*

**Failures**  
by [Mike Masnick](#)

Wed, Nov 22nd 2017 12:25pm

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It's no secret that Uber's management over the years has been pretty sketchy, if not downright nefarious. At some point I may write a longer post about this, but it appears that the company culture took the idea of *reasonably* pushing back on bad laws (such as those that restricted competition in the taxi space) and took it to mean that it could just ignore *all sorts of rules*. And it appears that a company culture was created that celebrated rulebreaking in all sorts of ways -- most of which were bad. The company has a new CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, who comes in with a strong reputation and has indicated his intent to change the culture. On Tuesday, the company admitted that **it had covered up that data on 57 million users had been leaked**. While the data didn't include credit card info or trip data, it **did** include drivers' license info for 7 million drivers, and the email addresses and phone numbers of 50 million riders.

It's bad enough that the data leaked, but covering it up is serious -- and means that the company is going to be hit with lawsuits. California (among others) has a **strong data breach law**, and it seems quite likely that Uber broke that law in failing to alert people that their info had been accessed. Perhaps more incredibly, the cover-up happened at the very same time that the company was negotiating with FTC officials over a **previous** data breach. Also, it appears that Uber paid off the hackers who were trying to extort the company to keep the data secret:

*Here's how the hack went down: Two attackers accessed a private GitHub coding site used by Uber software engineers and then used login credentials they obtained there to access data stored on an Amazon Web Services account that handled computing tasks for the company. From there, the hackers discovered an archive of rider and driver information. Later, they emailed Uber asking for money, according to the company.*

Apparently, Uber paid the hackers \$100,000 to keep the data from getting out.

In response to this, Khosrowshahi has **put up a blog post** taking responsibility for this and more or less admitting that the company had royally fucked up. He also fired two employees who were apparently responsible for covering this up (the report technically says one was "asked to resign" while the other was fired). The whole thing sounds like a complete shitshow from a company that, well, has a history of Broadway-level shitshows.

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While the blog post is clearly an attempt to show that the company is trying to turn over a new leaf, the whole situation is still troubling. The blog post doesn't mention paying off the hackers -- it just says that the company "obtained assurances that the downloaded data had been destroyed." It certainly feels like the overall statement could be stronger. Here's part of it:

*At the time of the incident, we took immediate steps to secure the data and shut down further unauthorized access by the individuals. We subsequently identified the individuals and obtained assurances that the downloaded data had been destroyed. We also implemented security measures to restrict access to and strengthen controls on our cloud-based storage accounts.*

*You may be asking why we are just talking about this now, a year later. I had the same question, so I immediately asked for a thorough investigation of what happened and how we handled it. What I learned, particularly around our failure to notify affected individuals or regulators last year, has prompted me to take several actions:*

- *I've asked [Matt Olsen](#), a co-founder of a cybersecurity consulting firm and former general counsel of the National Security Agency and director of the National Counterterrorism Center, to help me think through how best to guide and structure our security teams and processes going forward. Effective today, two of the individuals who led the response to this incident are no longer with the company.*
- *We are individually notifying the drivers whose driver's license numbers were downloaded.*
- *We are providing these drivers with free credit monitoring and identity theft protection.*
- *We are notifying regulatory authorities.*
- *While we have not seen evidence of fraud or misuse tied to the incident, we are monitoring the affected accounts and have flagged them for additional fraud protection.*

*None of this should have happened, and I will not make excuses for it. While I can't erase the past, I can commit on behalf of every Uber employee that we will learn from our mistakes. We are changing the way we do business, putting integrity at the core of every decision we make and working hard to earn the trust of our customers.*

It will be interesting to see if the company can **really** change its culture. I still think that the *concept* behind Uber is powerful and can do some fairly useful things in the world, but the way in which the *company* has gone about running its business has been a disgrace.

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**Ceyarrecks:** Should not the title of the upcoming article be rephrased to Local Taxpayers Pay \$3M due to Sheriff's Office,...?

The sheriff nor the deputies will EVER feel any of the pain of that \$3M,... only the temporary embarrassment,.. free to go ahead and do those exact same offensive actions again,...

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Stephen T. Stone ([profile](#)), 22 Nov 2017 @ 12:27pm



I'm shocked! Shocked!  
...well, not that shocked.

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Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 12:30pm



Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!

Masnick believes that scheduling "on teh internets" rather than by telephone is just right out of Star Trek.

Oh, and by the way: this is criminal in my view, and may be in a prosecutor's too, especially with Uber investigated / dodging at that time.

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Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 12:46pm



Re: Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!

Actually, "on teh internets" is pretty much right out of Star Trek. The Enterprise could query data from Starfleet HQ via subspace communication from thousands, if not millions, of light years away. And they could also make subspace visual and audio communications

from similar distances.

So yeah, Star Trek! :)

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 Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:18pm

  FW LW 

**Re: Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!**

It's almost like it's not the concept that's the question here...

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 Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 3:17pm

  FW LW 

**Re: Re: Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!**

To be honest, I was thinking the same thing until I hit

*I still think that the concept behind Uber is powerful and can do some fairly useful things in the world, but the way in which the company has gone about running its business has been a disgrace.*

This is the final sentence in the article. My immediate thought was "Um, Lyft?"

I think he either needs to add an "as illustrated by Lyft" in there, or just leave it as "the way in which the company has gone about running its business has been a disgrace, no matter what industry they're in."

So yeah, the AC has a point, even though his spin is a bit off.

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 Stephen T. Stone ([profile](#)), 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:28pm

  FW LW 

**Re: Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!**

What does the concept of ridesharing have to do with the article in question?

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 Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 3:19pm

  FW LW 

**Re: Re: Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!**

The last sentence of the article.

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 Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:43pm

  FW LW 

**Re: Same "concept" as Lyft, yet you never mention it!**

Do you just pick words out of a hat?

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 McGyver ([profile](#)), 22 Nov 2017 @ 12:47pm

  FW LW 

**No excuses... No regrets either...**

And I'm sure the hackers did nothing with that data after they were paid...  
Uber is the poster child for why rules and regulations aren't such a bad idea.

My favorite line though, is: "We will learn from our mistakes..."

Is there some magic number of mistakes they are waiting to accumulate before the learning starts?

52?

180?

42,673?

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Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:17pm



**Re: Google gets caught red-handed SPYING on people, AGAIN. TechDirt attempts to whitewash, sanitize, and distract from this fact, AGAIN. They fool absolutely NOBODY.... AGAIN.**

Well start your own blog to tell the world and quit gritting off of this one.

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Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:23pm



**Re: Google gets caught red-handed SPYING on people, AGAIN. TechDirt attempts to whitewash, sanitize, and distract from this fact, AGAIN. They fool absolutely NOBODY.... AGAIN.**

\*searches all major news outlets (and several minor ones), finds absolutely nothing about Google caught spying on people\*

Citation?

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Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:56pm



**Re: Re: Google gets caught red-handed SPYING on people, AGAIN. TechDirt attempts to whitewash, sanitize, and distract from this fact, AGAIN. They fool absolutely NOBODY.... AGAIN.**

Perhaps they are referring to this?

<https://qz.com/1131515/google-collects-android-users-locations-even-when-location-services-are-disabled/>

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Stephen T. Stone ([profile](#)), 22 Nov 2017 @ 2:00pm



**Re: Re: Re: Google gets caught red-handed SPYING on people, AGAIN. TechDirt attempts to whitewash, sanitize, and distract from this fact, AGAIN. They fool absolutely NOBODY.... AGAIN.**

**[Techdirt wrote an article about that yesterday, FYI.](#)**

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Anonymous Coward, 22 Nov 2017 @ 1:47pm



**This is priceless**

"We subsequently identified the individuals and obtained assurances that the downloaded

data had been destroyed."

"Assurances". They obtained "assurances". And now they're telling everyone that since they were stupid enough to believe those that we should all be too.

Let that just sink in for a moment. The CEO of a multi-billion dollar scaXXXcompany actually put that in writing and -- apparently -- the legal team didn't put down their bourbon and run as fast as they could to tackle him before he published it.

TD user "McGyver", elsewhere in this thread, says "Uber is the poster child for why rules and regulations aren't such a bad idea." and that's absolutely right. The best outcome here would be the forcible shutdown of Uber, confiscation of all business records, email, etc., investigation by an independent prosecutor (with prosecutions to follow if warranted), and dispersion of the company's assets to its victims as a means of partial compensation. Uber is a malignant cancer.

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