

Mozilla Still Isn't Ready to Advertise on Facebook Again: An Interview with CMO Jascha Kaykas-Wolff

Kaykas-Wolff talks 'Clear History,' the FTC and Facebook's new commitment to privacy

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In the wake of last year's Cambridge Analytica scandal, several companies decided to take a stand against Facebook by **suspending their advertising** on the platform. Perhaps the most vocal detractor was the Mozilla Corporation, which pulled its **seven-figure budget** and pledged not to advertise on Facebook until the tech giant made significant changes to the way it handled consumer privacy.

As of today, the company is still not advertising on Facebook.

Mozilla, which operates the popular web browser Firefox, is different from many of the consumer-facing businesses that spend ad dollars on Facebook. While Firefox is in direct competition with the likes of Microsoft, Google and Apple, Mozilla isn't a tech company—it's a not-for-profit organization that advocates for an open internet.

According to Jascha Kaykas-Wolff, CMO of Mozilla, this position has led the organization to make decisions as an advertiser that are different

from those of most businesses, including its decision to sever ties with Facebook.

For our upcoming report on the future of Facebook advertising, we spoke with Kaykas-Wolff to find out why Mozilla is still withholding its spending on the platform.

Why did Mozilla decide to pull its advertising from Facebook?

Prior to us making the decision to pull our advertising from Facebook, we had begun a re-evaluation of all our channels. One of the channels that we happened to be spending a good deal of our budget on was Facebook—and it had been performing very well for us.

But as consumers of the product ourselves, it wasn't clear how we as individuals could actually choose to allow Facebook to use our data differently, or have clarity around the way our information was being used or shared with third parties. Then the Cambridge Analytica discussion started to take place in a public forum, and for the first time in recent history, the topic of data use and privacy moved out of the niche world of policy wonks and into the general population.

As the broader consumer discussion was taking place, our evaluation had been completed, and we made a decision to take a vocal public stance about the way we felt Facebook needed to treat its customers and their data. At the same time, to show that it wasn't just a statement from us, we chose to remove our advertising and stop our engagement in the channels that Facebook operated.

What would have to change for Mozilla to begin advertising with Facebook again?

We are hopeful that Facebook and other technology companies will be very clear about how they use data, including what consumers have the ability to opt-in and opt-out of. We're not in a position yet where it's actually happened, but I believe that consumer sentiment and government action, along with advertisers voting with their dollars, will ultimately drive changes in the practices.

Speaking of government action, will the potential FTC fine have any impact?

The FTC case is a positive step toward enforcement in the US. But given how big Facebook is, a fine alone—no matter how much money—will not change the way Facebook does business. This underscores the importance of getting federal privacy legislation passed in the US. To really see change, we need to see limits on data collection and the use of granular and revocable consent. And to prevent future incidents, we need legislation that helps force behavioral changes and provides the FTC with the necessary resources to safeguard users.

What about Facebook's recent announcement that it will shift its focus away from the newsfeed and toward private messaging?

The announcement has been greeted by well-deserved skepticism, and a lot of it has focused on the company's history of empty promises and the privacy and security implications that come with an integrated platform. But we think there has been a piece missing from the conversation. Facebook's move toward private messaging is actually a step toward making its family of services into the newest walled garden. It seems clear that Facebook will intentionally box out other companies, apps and networks in the course of this consolidation. Rather than creating the next digital platform to bring the entire internet economy forward, encouraging downstream innovation, investment and growth, Facebook is closing out its competitors and citing privacy and security as its rationale.

The long-term challenge we need to focus on with Facebook isn't just whether we can trust the company with our privacy and security—it's also whether they're using privacy and security simply as a cover to get away with anticompetitive behavior.

What do you think of Facebook's announcement to introduce their "Clear History" tool?

We've been waiting since last May to see what this tool will actually look like, just like everyone else. According to initial reporting, all Facebook is doing with this tool is dissociating non-Facebook platform usage from Facebook platform usage. In the meantime, we've released two separate tools in Firefox that actually render the tool moot: Enhanced Tracking Protection and the Facebook Container extension.

We'd love to see Facebook offer real privacy-first options for engaging with its platform, but to do that, they'd have to transform their data practices significantly, and we have not seen concrete evidence of that so far.