



Internet asks too high a price to tell you who you are: Opinion

google-plus.JPG

Google Plus "gives you the opportunity to be yourself" but also opens a window to your life for advertisers and marketers. *(Karen Bleier/Getty Images)*

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By Carl Golden

I readily concede that I came late to the revolution in communications technology. I concede further — and without shame — that my high school-, middle school- and elementary school-aged daughters long ago surpassed me in their knowledge and mastery of all things computer-related.

I maintain an interest, of course, even though the majority of my understanding is gleaned from newspaper accounts of the latest trends and breakthroughs in social media and internet life generally.

Consequently, when a front-page story headlined

Had Edward Snowden somehow slipped unnoticed back into the United States from Russia and found employment at Google?

Those who enroll in Google Plus in search of that “opportunity to be yourself” and “give Google the common understanding of who you are” enables the company to harvest information on what they talk about and share online with others.

An analyst who studies social media and marketing called the system “a database of affinity” which could be “the holy grail for more effective brand advertising.”

Translation: When you give Google “that common understanding of who your are,” it will sell that understanding at great profit to advertisers who will, in turn, bombard you relentlessly with pitches for their products based on the interests expressed in your online chats and the information you share with others.

It’s all voluntary, of course; no one is forced to enroll. Ah, but the company has that covered as well by requiring a sign-up by anyone who wants to utilize some of the company’s other services.

The convenience of the internet in everything from applying for a mortgage to ordering a pizza has led to the incremental loss of personal privacy, a slow erosion of individual rights considered so sacrosanct they’re enshrined in the Constitution.

That document, of course, predated mouse pads, keyboards and flat-screen monitors, and never envisioned using chips and wires for “the opportunity to be yourself” or to deal off to a corporate behemoth a “common understanding of who you are.”

Before I’m portrayed as a **Luddite** — that 19th century group of English laborers who destroyed factory machinery because such devices were the work of Satan — let me be clear that I’m a daily user of the internet, reading newspapers and blog entries, occasionally purchasing something, and conversing via email.

I have no idea how to tweet; don’t have my very own Facebook so I can avoid letting the world know I lead a fairly dull existence; and, based what I’ve seen, YouTube is the most self-absorbed, egomaniacal device ever conceived.

On a bookshelf in my office is a desktop Royal manual ty

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