

**Caretakers of Your Productivity** since 1995

Monthly Newsletter

April 2025



by Anisa Williams, BSS Staff

provides peace of mind through guidance, education, and responsive support. We are the Caretakers of Your Productivity.



#### With Offices in:

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"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker with no need to be ashamed, because he straightforwardly handles the Word of Truth."

2 Timothy 2:15

It can seem like an overwhelming task to clear out your data "closet." Schedule a time (or times) to review, update, and remove your data from unused accounts to guard against your information being sold or exploited. Use this checklist as a starting point or sign up for a paid service to remove your data from the web.

Your forgotten data lurks in dark corners until it starts a journey of

exposure: a data broker scrapes it, adds it to their databases, and sells

it to third parties on the dark web. An old account may still be active

even though you haven't logged in for years. It comes down to trust: does the company that holds your account information have the right security measures in place to prevent a hack or exfiltration of your

## Where does your data live?

data?

Start with a review of all the places your information could live and note it in a secure spreadsheet or document:

Cloud storage - Google Drive, iCloud, OneDrive. In other words, where do your devices sync your data online?

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- Your computers and tablets (especially any that are no longer in use).
- Cell phones look at Files, Downloads, Accounts, Apps, and Gallery screenshots.
- Accounts on apps or websites that you haven't used in a while (did you ever delete your MySpace, Vine, or LiveJournal accounts?).
- Don't forget about that "someday" pile of Paper documents!
- Businesses or organizations that you no longer visit, like a dentist's or doctor's office.

### **Your Digital Footprint**

Reviewing all these areas, especially if you've been online for a decade or more, will take some time and sleuthing. There are some excellent DIY opt-out guides on the web (links below) or you can subscribe to a removal service like DeleteMe or Incogni to remove personal or business listings.

### Websites & Applications

- Delete data and logins for unused accounts across the web.
- Medical have you stopped seeing a doctor or dentist and never transferred your records?
- Request removal from Public Record and People Finder aggregate sites.
- Remove personal info and delete accounts from old blogs and social media.
- In your Google or Apple account privacy settings, remove any third-party access to your account.

#### **Devices**

- Delete files from Downloads, Documents, and Desktop.
- Empty your Trash/Recycle Bins, and Restore (if using Microsoft).
- Uninstall apps you don't use.
- Review app data policies in the Google and Apple stores.

#### Email

 Check email privacy settings to ensure no other applications or services have access to your account.

- Unsubscribe from emails you no longer read.
- Mark unsolicited emails spam and block senders.
- Empty your spam and trash folders regularly.

#### **Photos**

Download then bulk delete images from your social media accounts.

- Untag yourself in other's photos.
- Use an EXIF scrubber app to remove location and personal info before uploading to social media or sharing with others.
- Delete any blurry and duplicate images.



• If you are syncing photos to an online photo library like iPhoto or Google Photos, delete them off your phone.

### **Turn Paper into Digital**

It's good to perform an annual or semi-annual purge of your paper records. Those piles can add up! Decide where you are going to keep your data that starts hardcopy: do you have a secure location in your home to store documents, or would it be better to scan and save them digitally?

- Scan documents you need to keep when physical copies are not required.
- Store scanned documents onto an external hard drive or secured computer.
- Shred everything that you won't keep or have scanned in.
- Keep critical physical documents & digital files (on a hard drive) in a fireproof safe.
- Purge both paper and scanned documents once they hit their retention deadlines. Check state, local, and industry guidelines for best practices.

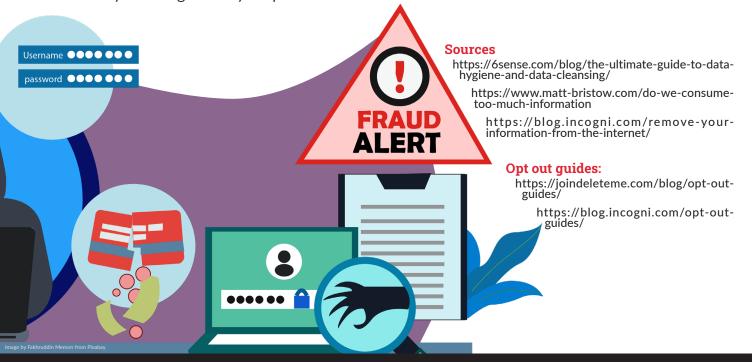
### Going forward: Secure and Safe

Now that you've cleaned up your data, keeping it clean is even easier:

- Turn on MFA for every account (this prevents threat actors from gaining access to your account if they get your password).
- Use a password manager app to manage your passwords and secure records.
- In your browsers: Enable privacy and Do Not Track; restrict personal info sharing & ad personalization
- Scan documents in that you need to keep right away, then shred the paper.
- Review data and privacy policies before downloading an app or signing up for a service.
- In applications, check for an opt-out feature and a way to remove your data from the company before installing.

Your hacked and stolen information can be sold to the highest bidder. Take your power back and keep data safe by knowing where your personal information is stored. 

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