

Is Privacy Dead?

Privacy isn't dead but if it is going to survive it must be vigilantly guarded. I'm not saying that you must go mountain man and live off the grid to protect your privacy. But if you are serious about keeping some portion of your life private, you must take certain actions to guard your privacy.

By the way, this is not a new problem. In 1890, before he became a Supreme Court justice, Louis Brandeis wrote a Harvard law review article with Samuel Warren titled the "Right to Privacy." They said that the "press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and of decency and "the details of sexual relations are spread in the columns of the daily papers." Their article could have been written today.

There is good news and, you guessed it, bad news.

The good news—many of our privacy woes are self-inflicted and they can be fixed. Now, the bad news—social media can be a swamp of indiscretion. It's not surprising that we occasionally shoot ourselves in the foot but what serves as a source of constant amazement is how fast we reload.

The founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, wrote a letter that was included with the SEC filings for Facebook's initial public offering. In his letter, Zuckerberg said that, "Facebook's social mission is to make the world more open and connected." In other words, Facebook's mission is to give us an endless supply of bullets to shoot ourselves in the foot. If we want to preserve our privacy, we must develop the discipline to think before we tweet or post.

As my Dad told me when I was a teenager, nothing good happens after 10:00 at night. Dad and I may disagree on that point but his advice holds true for social media. Don't tweet or post after 10:00 p.m. and you may wake up in the morning without a self-inflicted wound to your privacy.