HOW TO KILL FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE? GET THE PUBLIC TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE COST IS THEIR LIVES!!!

- As the intelligent people in the world cut off Facebook and Google, these services will finally be only comprised of sheep-like, low-IQ, robotish fools

Another week, another set of scandals at Facebook and Google. This past week, my colleagues reported that [Facebook](#) and [Google](#) had [abused Apple enterprise developer certificates in order to distribute info-scraping research apps](#), at times from underage users in the case of Facebook. Apple responded by cutting off both companies from developer accounts, [before shortly restoring them](#).

The media went into overdrive over the scandals, as predictable as the companies' statements that they *truly* care about users and their privacy. But will anything change?

I think we know the answer to this question: no. And it is never going to change because the vast majority of users just don't care one iota about privacy or these scandals.

Privacy advocates will tell you that the lack of a wide boycott against [Google](#) and particularly Facebook is symptomatic of a lack of information: if people really understood what was happening with their data, they would galvanize immediately for other platforms. Indeed, this is the very foundation for the GDPR policy in Europe: users should have a choice about how their

data is used, and be fully-informed on its uses in order to make the right decision for them.

I don't believe more information would help, and I reject the mentality behind it. It's reminiscent of the political policy expert who says that if only voters had more information — if they just *understood* the issue — they would change their mind about something where they are clearly in the "wrong." It's incredibly condescending, and obscures a far more fundamental fact about consumers: people know what they value, they understand it, and they are making an economic choice when they stick with Google or [Facebook](#) .

Alternatives exist for every feature and app offered by these companies, and they are not hard to find. You can use Signal for chatting, DuckDuckGo for search, FastMail for email, 500px or Flickr for photos, and on and on. Far from being shameless clones of their competitors, in many cases these products are even superior to their originals, with better designs and novel features.

And yet. When consumers start to think about the costs, they balk. There's sometimes the costs of the products themselves (FastMail is $30/year minimum, but really $50 a year or more if you want reasonable storage), but more importantly are the switching costs that come with using a new product. I have 2,000 contacts on Facebook Messenger — am I just supposed to text them all to use Signal from now on? Am I supposed to completely relearn a new photos app, when I am habituated to the taps required from years of practice on Instagram?

Surveillance capitalism has been in the news the past few weeks thanks to Shoshana Zuboff's 704-page tome of a book "[The Age](#)

of Surveillance Capitalism." But surveillance capitalism isn't a totalizing system: consumers do have choices here, at least when it comes to consumer apps (credit scores and the reporting bureaus are a whole other beast). There are companies that have even made privacy their distinguishing feature. And consumers respond pretty consistently: I will take free with surveillance over paid with privacy.

One of the lessons I have learned — perhaps the most important you *can* learn about consumer products — is just how much people are willing to give up for free things. They are willing to give up privacy for free email. They are willing to allow their stock broker to help others actively trade against them for a free stock brokerage account with free trading. People love free stuff, particularly when the harms are difficult to perceive.