


MICROSOFT CONFESSES IN WRITING THAT IT SPIES ON YOU AND READS EVERYTHING YOU DO ON ITS PLATFORM

Microsoft Bans “Offensive Language”

This morning, I got the kind of e-mail that most of us ignore: “Update to our terms of service” from Microsoft. But I love waking up to read a good contract in the morning, so I had a look at the [summary of changes](#) to the “Microsoft



Update to the Microsoft Services Agreement E-mail

Services Agreement,” which applies to things like Skype, Office 365, OneDrive, and [a whole list of other](#)

[services](#). The summary turned out to be a 27 bullet point document of mostly bland changes — except for point 5:

5. In the Code of Conduct section, we’ve clarified that use of offensive language and fraudulent activity is prohibited. We’ve also clarified that violation of the Code of Conduct through Xbox Services may result in suspensions or bans from participation in Xbox Services, including forfeiture of content licenses, Xbox Gold Membership time, and Microsoft account balances associated with the account.

Looking through the [full text of the new agreement](#), I found the relevant change in Section 3(a)(iv):

Don't publicly display or use the Services to share inappropriate content or material (involving, for example, nudity, bestiality, pornography, offensive language, graphic violence, or criminal activity).

So wait a sec: I can't use Skype to have an adult video call with my girlfriend? I can't use OneDrive to back up a document that says "fuck" in it? If I call someone a mean name in Xbox Live, not only will they cancel my account, but also confiscate any funds I've deposited in my account? (And are we no longer allowed to shoot people in [Call of Duty](#)? Animated violence doesn't really get any more "graphic" than this Microsoft-approved video game offers.)

And how are they going to enforce this ban? Are they going to be looking through my Skype sessions? Section 3(b):

When investigating alleged violations of these Terms, Microsoft reserves the right to review Your Content in order to resolve the issue.

Got it.

What's clear here is that Microsoft is reserving the right to cancel your account whenever they feel like it. They do nothing to define "offensive language" (or "graphic violence," for that matter) and in 2018 when anyone can be offended by anything, these terms allow Microsoft staff to play unrestrained censor if and when they choose. Given that Google's YouTube uses that power to remove politically "sensitive" videos (like [those on legal firearm modifications](#)), should we expect that Microsoft will also be removing content and users to earn PR points with the politically correct movement *du jure*?

What's also clear is that they reserve the right to go through your private data, and these terms seem to pretty clearly allow them to watch and listen to your Skype calls, so long as they are

“investigating” something. The terms don’t appear to require any complaint to be filed against you — just that an employee decide that they want to “investigate.”

I’ll be setting my Skype account not to renew itself.

[Update – I’ve been banned from Reddit’s /r/Microsoft for sharing this story...

Banned from /r/Microsoft

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