

## **Google Aims To Pitch Privacy With The New Pixel 4 And Other Increasingly Smart Devices**

As Google's latest line of hardware products promise to more seamlessly be a part of users' lives, the data-driven giant wants to earn trust for the brand even as it collects increasingly more, and more personal, information.

At its hardware unveiling on Tuesday in New York City, the company introduced a suite of updated devices including the Pixel 4 smartphone, a new Wi-Fi router, a new laptop, a new pair of smart wireless headphones, new smart speakers and a new smart display. However, with widespread wariness about the data that companies like Google and rival Facebook collect, the company made sure not to simply tack on just a single privacy slide along the way. Instead, it embedded mention of new privacy tools throughout the hourlong presentation while explaining specifically how to control what it does and doesn't collect and share.

As impressive as Google's new hardware and software might be—with radar sensors in the phones, more capabilities for the Google Assistant in the future Pixel Buds and a camera that even photographer Annie Leibovitz loves—ignoring privacy could make it hard for the company to get people to ditch their Apple devices. After all, Apple has been perceived as more privacy-focused by design, especially because Apple's advertising business is far smaller than its tech rivals.

All of this is likely to help Google herald in what it's calling an era of "ambient computing"—where Google is everywhere and in everything while moving seamlessly from the device to the cloud and back again.

"This ambient computing era is going to bring all kinds of new interfaces, services and devices, but it's also introducing new challenges," Rick Osterloh, Google's head of hardware, said during his remarks. "When computing is always available, designing for security and privacy becomes more important than ever. You need to know that your data is safe. Protecting your data and respecting your privacy are at the core of everything we do."

According to Forrester Analyst Frank Gillett, the increased emphasis that tech giants are placing on connecting ecosystems of devices shows that the mobile era has "just kinda broken out of the mold of just mobile apps." In fact, he tells *Forbes* that the Pixel 4 "totally nailed it" when it comes to providing new features that provide a compelling example for "what you do with a lighthouse device like this."

"It's a mindshare as much as anything else," he says. "It's 'Hey, look at Google's devices and all the cool things we're going to be doing.'"

As regulators and consumers alike become increasingly wary about how tech giants collect, share and use personal online information for advertising and other marketing purposes, Google has placed increased prominence on the way it talks about privacy. Earlier this year, it announced changes to its Chrome browser to give users more control over what's shared and what's not. Meanwhile, California has been [busy putting the finishing touches on its own data privacy law](#), which will govern data use in the state starting in January of 2020.

"We know that privacy is personal," Osterloh said, "which is why you have the controls to choose the settings that are right for you." He said Google's products include ways to switch camera and microphones off or on with smart home devices like the Google Nest.

In his remarks on Tuesday about the updated Google Nest, Rishi Chandra, Google's vice president and general manager of Google Nest, pointed out Google's privacy commitments that were unveiled in May that detailed how the tech works. Acknowledging that "it's your home, the personal and privacy space in your life," Chandra announced that the latest version of Nest will include new measures taken by Google to make sure third-party partners for every smart home device will have to pass a security review before getting access to users' Nest devices.

"You should have confidence of how Google and its partners are protecting your own data," he said. "And then, you can focus instead on the great benefits for your home."

Privacy also was pitched as a feature in Google's flagship smartphone, the Pixel 4. Because the phone's new radar sensor for gesture commands can detect activity around the device, Sabrina Ellis, VP of product management, said "privacy had to be built in from the start." She said the motion sensor can be turned off, but when it's on, all the data is processed locally on the phone and "never saved or shared with other Google services."

According to Ellis, Google will let users manage activity data on the device so that users can choose what they want to share or not—and what they want to delete. They'll also be able to ask Google Assistant to delete information based on the day, week or another period of time. She said Google's Titan M chip is also used to keep biometric and other data secure. (She said users also can ask to get more details by asking, "Hey Google, how do you keep my data safe?")

"Your phone has some of your most personal, private information," she said. "And we have a responsibility to keep it safe and secure."

Despite all the assurances, the new features might still give room for many to doubt Google's intentions. For example, a useful new voice recorder feature transcribes recordings instantaneously and provides a way to search audio files based on key words. However, that might also make people wonder if Google has the same access to the search capabilities, which could fuel conspiracy theories about whether Google and others are listening to devices to inform data-driven advertising.

But the privacy assurances might be seen by some as mere table stakes—especially after Google faced criticism for employees listening in on conversations for human review of the voice assistant. Google has also been known to track location data, which prompted the company to add in features that let users hide their location from Google Maps.

The timing is especially important as Google attempts to gain market share from Apple and Samsung, not to mention Microsoft, which also recently debuted a new smartphone earlier

this month. The company might also have a new opportunity to reach people who couldn't previously use a Pixel device—thanks to newly announced plans to roll out to every major wireless carrier.

But will privacy be enough of a selling point to make people switch? Gillett said it's good that the company is "at least acknowledging" the issue and its implications.

"What I would say is at least they're in the conversation," he says. "They're not in the hole that Facebook is in, and there's so much more that they and everyone else needs to do."

<http://staging.forbesmiddleeast.com/google-aims-to-pitch-privacy-with-the-new-pixel-4-and-other-increasingly-smart-devices>