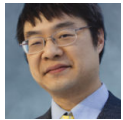


For \$15, you can purchase incorrect information, and to prevent people from getting it, you have to renew every three months

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20070815-01

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Raymond Chen

Given what I know about Naveen Jain, I basically view everything he does with enormous skepticism.¹ I mean, I trust lawyers more than I trust that guy, that's how bad it is. After being booted from InfoSpace, Jain moved across the street and founded Intelius, a company that does basically the same thing: Selling directory information.² Recently, the company launched a cell phone look-up service: For \$15 you can obtain the cell phone number of anybody in their directory. Mind you, the information is cobbled together from various private sources, and it can even be wrong, but if the result is incorrect, you won't get a refund. Cellphone industry lobbyist Steve Largent calls it a "scam", and that's saying a lot, coming from somebody whose own job doesn't rank very high on the trust scale either. They claim to have collected this information from private sources. Did you give the pizza delivery store your cell phone number? They may have sold it to Intelius. The auto mechanic shop? They may have sold it to Intelius. Ironically, the very first sentence in the Intelius Privacy Policy is "Intelius respects your right to privacy, and we are committed to protecting it." And yet they make it difficult to protect your privacy: Read on. I called their customer support line to remove my cell phone number from their database. You can try it, too: +1-425-974-6100, then 1, then 1; but I'll save you the trouble and tell you the answer. (If you don't trust me, you can call and confirm this information for yourself.)

- Make a cell phone search for yourself on their Web site.
- Proceed as if you actually wanted to pay \$15 to get the information, but don't do it.
- Print out the Web page that shows the information that they are offering to sell for \$15. (Your cell phone number, your unlisted telephone number, etc.)
- Send a fax to +1-425-974-6194 containing that screenshot, your name, address, and date of birth.
- Wait seven to ten days for the change to take effect.
- The request is valid for three months; after three months, you must repeat the process.

Such is their commitment to privacy that they make you jump through these hoops four times a year. Even the opt-out requests for the dreaded Direct Marketing Association are good for five years. According to the privacy statement, you can direct any questions or concerns regarding their Privacy Policy to privacy@intelius.com. Good luck. (They brag about the blog they started in April, but if you follow the link you find no blog.) As Scott McNealy famously put it, “You have zero privacy anyway. Get over it.” **Nitpicker’s Corner**

¹The opinions expressed herein are my own and are not an official position of Microsoft Corporation.

²Although this statement is written as if it were a fact, it is actually my interpretation based on what I remember and may be incorrect.

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