PUBLIC INTEREST TECHNOLOGY

How to survive in a hyperconnected world #PublicInterestTech

As the internet gets more powerful and technology plays an increasing role in our lives, it becomes more and more important that we learn how to navigate uncharted technological territory. Cybersecurity expert Bruce Schneier looks at why it's necessary for us to find innovative ways to use surveillance data to the benefit of the public good, while still maintaining our individual security.

Technology is transforming every area of our lives. But as it opens new avenues and shows us fresh possibilities, tech can also deepen existing inequalities. We believe in harnessing technology to serve justice and the public interest—and we see a wealth of opportunities to do so. That's why the Ford Foundation is working with a community of partners to develop a path for people to use their technology skills to change the world for the better: the professional field of public interest technology.

Transcript begins.

BRUCE SCHNEIER: Everything we do that involves a computer produces data about that interaction. What happened? Who did it? Where it was. That's very valuable and very personal. It's surveillance data. And we need as society to figure out how to get the group benefits of it while maintaining the security of it individually.

Public interest technologist, Bruce Schneier. I guess this is take one. Clap.

[A white bearded man wearing a flat cap and a floral shirt.]

Security is something that affects all of us at the individual level, the family level, the community level, the national level, the global level. An easy example will be Waze. I used Waze to get here today. A driver phone application that tells me about traffic based on every user of Waze under surveillance. So, enormous group benefit yet everyone under surveillance. How do we get that benefit while maintaining security? It's not just security. It's future of work, it's food safety, it's transportation, or medical data. I think there's enormous value in putting all of our medical data in one giant database and letting researchers at it. Yet that's incredibly private and incredibly personal. How do we make that work? Core tech decisions have policy ramifications. Policy decisions have tech ramifications. And policy makers need to understand tech in the same way tech people need to understand policy. And, to me, a public interest technologist is someone who understands that and tries to bridge the tech and policy worlds. I want everyone to think about the public interest ramifications of their work. And I want some of us to go into public interest tech as the thing we do. Maybe as a full-time career, maybe as a sabbatical, as a couple-year break from this startup and that big tech company. The demand for this kind of work

is enormous. Tech is shaping the contours of the future more than anything else. And how that future looks has to depend on what we as society want. It can't just be what the tech permits. And the only way we can have these conversations at the right time with the right people is by having people who understand tech involved in the policy from the beginning.

> [This is tech at work for the public! Hashtag Public Interest Tech. Ford Foundation dot org forward slash tech. Ford Foundation logo: a globe made up of a series of small, varied circles.]

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