

Let's get phygital: How to protect yourself from the unconscious flow of data

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

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We now live in an age where our physical selves live along our digital selves. What you do offline is shared online and "peacocking" has become prevalent for digital citizens of the 21st century.



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One of the unintended consequences of living in the 21st Century is the unconscious flow of data, where people unknowingly share information about themselves that they wouldn't particularly want to share with anyone. This makes people vulnerable and often we see people become the prey of data vultures, whether unethical business practice or data breaches.

If we look at Facebook, it seems they can't catch a break. One of the biggest misuses of data, in our time, was the Cambridge Analytica scandal. More recently the larger hack on every conceivable scale, whereby over 50 million users accounts were hacked and a threat from the hacker to live stream the deletion of Mark Zuckerberg's account. One of the biggest data breaches in 14 years.



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I was very curious to understand if the youth could give advice on how to protect our "Phygital" selves and further explore the topic with a Cyber Safety Expert.

[Shae Leigh](#) from Red and Yellow Creative School of Business interviewed a few students on campus and watch what they had to say:

I further interviewed Rianette Leibowitz, CEO of SaveTNet Cyber Safety to give us a deeper understanding of how we can protect ourselves online and how brands can be more conscious of ethical practice:

Why is it important to know how to protect your phygital self?

We are all building a digital footprint and online reputation, which has a direct impact on our lives. What we do in cyberspace creates a ripple effect, which ultimately could help you to find or lose your dream job. The information we share online could be used to steal from you – whether it is your data, your money, your identity or in some extreme cases your children.

Who is responsible to educate digital citizens of the Big Brother activity?

Cyberspace and social media platforms are not bad and they empower us to explore unlimited opportunities. However, it is our (as users of these platforms) responsibility to ensure we understand the community rules of these platforms, that we respect the rest of the people on these platforms and that we manage our own security settings.

Before you start driving a car, you ensure that you get the needed training and practice before you venture onto the freeway. Not everyone will do the right thing and obtain a license to drive legally though. While the platforms have a responsibility to share guidelines and set safe boundaries, it is each user's responsibility to educate themselves about



Rianette Leibowitz, CEO of SaveTNet Cyber Safety. Image supplied.

the platforms they choose to use.

What is an acceptable practice for brands and what is becoming alarming practices?

Brands have access to valuable data, which informs their marketing, communications and business strategies in a valuable way. In my opinion, this is acceptable as data empowers brands to not only offer customers what they want but to also connect directly with them in a more personal way.

There is a blurred line though as brands are invading customer's platforms (we all have seen those 'coincidental' ads suddenly appearing) and tracking online movements to an extent where they can start predicting your behaviour. Smart cities and artificial intelligence will become an important development to manage.

What are the consequences to those who don't protect themselves?

While the internet and platforms are not dangerous, it is what people do on it that could put you at risk to experience issues such as cyberbullying, harassment, revenge pornography, sexual grooming, hacked webcams, identity theft/ catfishing and more. Some of these could have devastating consequences – from losing your money and assets to people who commit suicide.

People should never feel alone and hopeless and need to reach out as soon as possible when they have been put into compromising positions.

What tips can give digital citizens to protect their “phygital” selves?

SaveTNet Cyber Safety saw the need to create awareness for cyber safety and to create a solution for people who are in trouble. We have a network of experts like forensic analysts, psychologist, legal advisors and the relevant people at the police who are ready to assist victims of cybercrime.

There are many tips, which we are happy to share, however, think before you click and if you wouldn't do something in 'real life' then why would you do it in cyberspace?

For more on the topic, make sure to [book tickets](#) to *The Social Media Landscape Briefing 2019*, taking place on 16 October 2018 in Johannesburg and 18 October 2018 in Cape Town.

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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