

Your Use of Amazon Echo?

I use my Amazon Echo (Siri-like device) for a shopping list, weather and sports scores, do you find other uses for your law practice or otherwise for the Amazon Echo?

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I've never seen much attraction to using Siri or similar services, they never seem to do what I'm asking.

As I understand it, though, the Amazon and Google devices are always on - they don't require you to activate them. What's the data retention policy? Can Amazon, Google and/or third parties access every conversation had in the presence of the device?

Mark Lyon

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I think your smartphone already does that.

Eugene Lee, California

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You can also use Alexa to play your amazon music playlists (and you can adjust the volume via voice command). Also, you can ask Alexa to tell you a joke, and you can ask her to tell you a cat joke. You can also tell her to set a timer for X minutes. Perhaps best of all, she can control a lot of the 'smart' things in your home. We've replaced the lock on the downstairs door with a smart lock. We can tell Alexa to lock or unlock the door, from upstairs. We've also got a couple light switches that we've replace with Wemo switches. If you're leaving/entering a room and your hands are full... or if you've left a room and you forgot to turn off a light, you can tell Alexa to turn on/off the light.

Laurie Axinn Gienapp, Massachusetts

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In case you thought I was being facetious

<http://money.cnn.com/2014/06/06/technology/security/nsa-turn-on-phone/>

Eugene Lee

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You're absolutely correct. That's been a known, real-world attack since 2006, when the government used Nextel phones as "roving bugs", even when the phones appeared to be powered off. *US v Tomero*, 462 F.Supp.2d 565 (SDNY 2006). [1] Even before then, the government ordered OnStar to activate built-in cell phones to serve as bugs in vehicles. *In re US Order Auth. Roving Interception*, 349 F. 3d 1132 (9th Cir. 2003). [2] There's also a real-world demonstration that exploits widely-used Cisco VOIP desk phones as a very effective bug. [3]

If something like Alexa is voluntarily logging your conversations, I fear the Courts would not take the same approach they did when the government wanted to activate a dormant system. Accessing something the user transmits or stores voluntarily is likely going to be allowed. [4]

It's a scary world we live in.

Mark Lyon

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Agreed, a very scary world . . .

Eugene Lee

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I don't have an Echo at the office. No, thank you.

But we do use ours at home primarily to play music (from Amazon Prime Music), podcasts, and audiobooks. I'm not a huge fan of the TuneIn app that it uses to play podcasts and its lack of flexibility, but it works if you just want to play the latest episode.

Ours, like apparently the majority of Echos out there, lives in our kitchen. Perfect place for a voice-activated technology, as hands are usually busy. We also ask it random questions, and usually it provides an answer from Wikipedia.

<http://www.recode.net/2016/9/21/12997080/amazon-echo-survey-kitchen>

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

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1. We use it primarily for music. Have it connected to my commercial-free Pandora account.
2. Spelling: great for kids "Alexa, how do you spell canyon?"
3. Remember "choose your own adventure" books? Say, "Alexa, open the magic door" and go on an adventure. Another one great for kids.
4. Ordering stuff at huge discounts.

Nick A. Ortiz, Florida

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Alexa is my friend. I use her to set alarms, traffic and weather, podcasts, Pandora, Amazon prime music, placing orders from Amazon, etc.

David Shulman