

Uber & Ethics

I'm easing my way into the android world (after finally giving up on my Windows Lumia 928). Based on the wonderful experiences most sezzers reported on Uber, I thought I'd check it out. I was shocked by the amount of information and access required to open an Uber account. What worried me most was that Uber reads all my contact information and syncs it to their server.

I have my android 7.0 phone synced to my Outlook account, which includes all sorts of personal and contact information on my clients. Uber claims that they need this information to make it easier to share a ride with them.

It seems unethical to me to divulge all my client information to Uber just so I can hail a ride.

Is there some way to maintain two separate sets on Contacts on my phone, and only give Uber access to those few contacts I might really share a ride with (and still make it easy to access the "real" contact/client list for phone calls and emails)?

I was shocked by the amount of information and access required to open an Uber account.

Uber alles indeed, eh?

Robert Link

According to Uber, they only sync your contacts with their server if you opt to use the app to split fares or invite friends to use the service.

<https://www.uber.com/legal/other/android-permissions/>

This permission appears to be based on the way Google sets up Android permissions rather than an Uber requirement. With an iPhone you can opt out of sharing contacts entirely.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

But,

1. They always have access to my client information. How can that ever be considered to be maintaining my clients' confidentiality?
2. Why would I trust Uber (or anyone else) to protect my client information and only sync when I say it's okay?
3. I'm not getting an iPhone, but the difference is very interesting. I assume it goes back to Google collecting data about EVERYTHING.
4. ANDROID EXPERTS (and android users), is there any way around this? Is there a way to maintain two separate sets of contacts and only allow Uber access to the non-client contacts?

Thanks.

John Varde, Illinois

What they have is a list of contacts. They have no idea whether those are your clients, children, girlfriends, etc. It's just a list of names, so in that sense I don't think any client confidences have been violated. They don't even know you're a lawyer.

Kevin W. Grierson

Respectfully, I think that's nonsense. It doesn't matter if Uber knows what it has, or not.

The duty is on me to protect the confidentiality of my clients' information. I believe that, under the Illinois rule of professional responsibility, if my email address is hacked, then I have breached my clients' confidentiality, and I have to notify them of the hack.

It doesn't matter if the hacker knows I'm a lawyer or not; what matters is that my client information is now running around the internet, being sold to the highest bidder, and it came from me.

Besides, Google knows I'm a lawyer, ergo everyone knows I'm a lawyer. Your argument doesn't make me feel any better about Uber and/or Google.

John Varde

I just signed up for Uber and I don't remember being asked for my contacts. But if I was, I just said "no." I do that with any program that asks to get ALL my contacts. I prefer to control what information is disseminated. I had no problem using the app even without it have all my contacts.

Elizabeth Pugliese, Maryland

Look, I don't really have a dog in this fight. I have an iPhone. :) But the key here is that you have a duty to protect your client's *confidential* information, not information that is otherwise publicly available. For most clients, their name and phone number would not be confidential information. If you stored client's credit card information, or information about their cases, in your contacts database, that would clearly be a problem.

I agree that the way Google's permissions are set up seems unnecessarily invasive, and I don't know that I would agree to it on general principle, but I don't see it as a violation of any particular duty you have as an attorney. If you have an LEO or an ethical consideration in the Model Rules that indicates otherwise, I'm happy to be educated to the contrary.

Kevin W. Grierson

Android or Apple phone? According to Kevin G., it's not an issue with an iPhone.

John Varde

Android

Elizabeth Pugliese

Hmmm. When I tried to install the Uber app, it requested my approval of 10 different permissions, including permission to access my contacts. It appeared to be an all-or-nothing choice.

John Varde
