

Adobe uproar shows no one trusts Big Tech

An update to Adobe's terms of service from February sparked widespread outrage from its customers last week, highlighting the trust deficit between companies rushing to roll out AI features and the people who fear their content is unwittingly being used to train those systems.

What happened: Photoshop-maker Adobe recently sent out a notification informing its users of updates to its TOS that the company said "clarified that we may access your content through both automated and manual methods." Though the language changed months earlier, in February, screenshots of the updates and other sections of the TOS went viral on X last week, prompting Adobe customers like TV food personality Alton Brown to say they were suspending use of the company's products.

Their concerns appear to be that Adobe would train its generative AI model Firefly on user content, or be able to access proprietary projects that are under an NDA with a client.

Adobe says it's a nothingburger

Facing the prospect of a mass boycott, Adobe responded swiftly that user content is not used as training data for its generative AI models and that the language around this topic in its TOS had barely changed for more than a decade, which outlets like The Verge and The Register confirmed was the case.

Still, Adobe's Chief Product Officer Scott Belsky acknowledged the wording in the notification is "unclear" and that "trust and transparency couldn't be more crucial these days."

He's right. People are on edge. As tech companies attempt to ride the AI wave, they've been accused of using surfboards made from materials they didn't pay for or ask permission to access (see: Scarlett Johansson's spat with OpenAI over its Her-sounding voice assistant). And Adobe, which already doesn't have the best reputation for its dominance in the creative software space, is under a particularly harsh spotlight for any moves, real or perceived, that would slight its customers.