

# The Issue with B2C Data Removers

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The Data Broker Industry

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# Data Broker Problems

Removing information from data broker websites can be surprisingly difficult, even with 20 states having some form of comprehensive privacy laws, and with most of the thousands of data brokers applying California's CCPA as their standard privacy practice across all DSARs (digital subject access requests).

For an overview of the data broker industry covering thousands of companies:

[EPIC: Consumer Privacy](#)

Examples of bad business practices:

[Background check companies allegedly deceiving customers](#)

[Close Up Look at the Consumer Data Broker Radaris](#)

Cybersecurity breaches:

[National Public Data Theft](#)

[PeopleConnect Data Breach](#)

The data broker industry continues to be fraught with conflicts of interest, redundancy, poor quality, and information security problems.

# How B2C Data Removal Companies Contribute to the Problem

However, the data removal industry, started by Reputation.com in 2006 and amplified by the founding of DeleteMe in 2010, Optery in 2020 and some 20 other firms such as BrandYourself, PrivacyBee and Incogni - was meant to empower consumers. However, the B2C data removal companies have relied on collecting PII (personally identifiable information) including name, address, phone number, e-mail, and more from users, and querying data broker websites and/or their API's to determine if a person's data exists with that data broker.

This is problematic because

The large amount of PII that exists in these data removal companies now becomes a target for threat actors

Data brokers use that query information to build their database. To be clear, people who use data removal sites that are querying data broker sites are feeding information to create or resurface their records, and then paying for a service to take it down.

# How B2C Data Removal Companies Contribute to the Problem

For example, see section 7 of Optery's Privacy Policy that states:

"Our paid subscription plans provide services for submitting personal information opt out, suppression and removal requests to lists of third-party data brokers and information aggregators ("Removal List(s)") on your behalf ("Removal Service(s)"). If you purchase a paid subscription plan, as a condition to fulfilling your subscription plan, (i) you must provide your personally identifiable information ("PII") such as full name, birth year and home address to Optery, Inc. and (ii) ***Optery, Inc. must send your PII to the data brokers and information aggregators included in the Removal Lists.*** This information is required by the data brokers and information aggregators in order to locate your record(s) and remove you from their database(s). ***We cannot control, guarantee or warranty how these third-parties will treat your PII or what they will do with it.***"

Referring to a data broker website that Optery queries, InstantCheckmate.com, the data broker's Terms of Use confirm:

"You agree that, in the event you access the Websites or use the Services and Materials and Background Information Services including by, but not limited to, conducting a search for yourself on the Websites or authorizing another person to conduct a search for you on the Websites, ***you have expressly consented to the use and display of information about you (including, without limitation, your name and other attributes of your identity) on the Websites for any and all commercial and non-commercial purposes.***"

# How B2C Data Removal Companies Contribute to the Problem

Hush's recent testing of several data broker websites and B2C data removal tools confirmed that by searching for information about various individuals using the vendors' required techniques, that same information ends up back on data broker websites within 24 hours.

As shared by the InfoSec website Krebs on Security:

"There are a growing number of online reputation management companies that offer to help customers remove their personal information from people-search sites and data broker databases. There are, no doubt, plenty of honest and well-meaning companies operating in this space, but it has been my experience that ***a great many people involved in that industry have a background in marketing or advertising — not privacy.***

[KrebsonSecurity: Mozilla Drops Onerep After CEO Admits to Running People-Search Networks](#)

***"Also, some so-called data privacy companies may be wolves in sheep's clothing."*** On March 14, KrebsOnSecurity published an abundance of evidence indicating that the CEO and founder of the data privacy company OneRep.com was responsible for launching dozens of people-search services over the years."

[KrebsonSecurity: CEO of Data Privacy Company Onerep.com Founded Dozens of People-Search Firms](#)

And finally, Consumer Reports issued an unflattering report stating how B2C data removal companies are for the most part ineffective -

[The Record: Consumer Reports study finds data removal services are often ineffective](#)

# Why Hush's Novel Approach to Privacy Works

By contrast, Hush's unique and patent-pending approach queries the surface and deep web to find pages that contain information about our member, but Hush never passes information to a data broker to query whether a record exists or not.

By design, Hush's multimodal neural network (AI) for data aggregation, identify resolution, and bot-based removal fundamentally doesn't require PII to run a highly accurate search and operates entirely differently than the existing B2C data removal industry.