

Is your LinkedIn profile open to data miners?

by Rachel Ranosa
20 Apr 2018



As data privacy questions continue to emerge out of the ashes of the Cambridge Analytica/Facebook case, the tussle against data mining firms now appears to extend beyond the realm of Facebook.

The same privacy questions also haunt professional networking site LinkedIn, in the form of a lawsuit involving the social network and tech startup hiQ Labs shows.

The concern for HR professionals, experts have advised, are the questions around how data on talent acquisition and retention is being scraped by third-party data miners.

LinkedIn vs hiQ Labs

In 2017, reports surfaced that San Francisco-based analytics group hiQ Labs had been scanning LinkedIn profiles for certain behavioral signals.

The startup's proprietary tool, Keeper, interprets these signals and then notifies employers if a certain LinkedIn member is busy scouting around for a new job and likely to leave their current company.

Another service, Skill Mapper, claims to help employers "optimize internal talent" by surveying the skills publicly displayed on LinkedIn by their employees.

hiQ Labs is in the business of building talent management algorithms that use machine learning and predictive analytics. It uses bots to feed off publicly available information on social media. It packages this information as insights regarding employee behavior.

LinkedIn sent a cease-and-desist order to hiQ Labs to shut down the startup's activities and then blocked the group's access to the Microsoft-owned social network. It said hiQ Labs' use of the platform was "without permission and without authorization".

When LinkedIn and hiQ Labs faced off in a district court, however, the judge ruled in favor of hiQ Labs and raised the question of anticompetitive behavior on the part of LinkedIn. hiQ Labs argued that LinkedIn itself is planning to use a similar in-house service called Talent Insights.

LinkedIn's Talent Insights platform, launching later this year, is said to give a "real-time view of the talent marketplace powered by LinkedIn's ever-growing dataset".

LinkedIn has appealed the decision of the district court.

<https://www.hrtechnologynews.com/news/talent-acquisition/is-your-linkedin-profile-open-to-data-miners/98546>

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