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Stuff that matters to Wayne

Google's Tentacles Stretch Further: Verify Your Identity

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I had an old 'smart phone' lying around and I thought about reconnecting it for one single purpose for our business. It would not phone, it would not text, it would not even go to a website and search. It's only job would be to take a photo, and upload the photo to our private cloud storage. Of course, I know that Google is invasive and nasty so I was sure to create a new account, without linking any of my personal contact information to the account. For the single purpose of uploading photos, surely they won't want to know who I am, right? Wrong. I remember years ago before I had started my google exodus journey (89% complete now, btw) they had added this neat little 'security' feature under the log in. It was saying 'Add a phone number to make sure you won't ever get locked out and to make sure we can verify your identity.' That was the start of my 'questioning' period. Why does my email provider need my phone number? And why do other companies not ask for this? And if I give them this number, and they are connected to my telecom, will this provide tracking even if my GPS is off? Etc, etc. I remember always choosing the 'skip' option when this prompt came on. It seems like skipping this option is now over.

Today while setting up this phone, I successfully:

- created a new and anonymous google account on the phone
- created fake answers to the security questions, not linked to me.
- skipped adding the phone feature
- saw the successful account creation message

Then, as I went into the google play store to download the only app I need to do the only purpose this phone will perform, there was a 'something is wrong with your account' message. I entered the password about 5 times and it still spewed the same error. Finally I went to the gmail login page and tried to log in that way where I was greeted with the message "Suspicious account activity is suspected" (something like that). I then was *forced* to 'verify my identity' with a phone number. It gave me two options: sms (text) or voice. So, I went and got my Fongo number, which works for both SMS and voice calls no problem, and I entered that and chose the SMS option. It then spewed out a message "You can't use this phone number." Really? Go figure. It's a fully working phone number which can receive texts. Then I chose the 'voice call' option since there is nothing wrong with that whatsoever. And, as long as the owner of the phone number is there to receive the call and enter in the code, the identity is verified, right? Wrong. It also would not accept my fongo number for that voice call either. Finally, just to test the theory, I gave google one more piece of my identity. I entered my 'big telecom' personal cell phone number into the sms verification code window and *boom*. Instantly I received the code which I entered and the account was activated. Now it is proven that there is no way to be part of google without giving them *undeniable proof of your identity* but even worse, your big telecom phone number. I encourage everyone reading this to start their own google exodus journey because it's for sure that you've already given them way more than you thought. Don't wait. Ubuntu is there as the solution and on any platform. ps. Yes, you could probably use a pay-as-you-go phone to accomplish this account verification - I didn't test. This would be better than what I did.

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