

## **Panel Summary: Trust & Safety: Our Online and Offline Lives**

*Moderator: Adam Thierer, Mercatus Center*

*Panelists: Mark Eichorn, Federal Trade Commission; Brian Fung, Washington Post; Nick Papas, Airbnb; Catherine Teitelbaum, Ask.fm*

Overview: A look at the importance of trust and safety online and in the sharing economy.

Brian Fung set the stage in terms of recent thoughts reporters are having about the sharing economy. He pointed out that companies are engaging with government in new and beneficial ways. Security and privacy, in particular, are coming to the forefront of discussion for technology companies and many are leading the way in that field as other industries look to Silicon Valley for guidance. Fung also discussed the broader picture of current legislation and where he thinks it is heading. He spoke of pending regulation concerning companies taking punitive measures against negative reviews online and guidelines for the benefits of workers in the sharing economy.

Mark Eichorn represented the government side of the conversation and offered how the FTC looks at these issues and discussed the commission's effort to educate with workshops and advocacy campaigns. He also mentioned how, in terms of privacy, it is important to remember that in the sharing economy there are consumers on both sides of the transactions. They are all information-based transactions with a facilitator in the middle. Therefore, there are a lot of players that need to be accounted for.

Nick Papas shared how Airbnb builds a community of trust on its platform with a strong review system, robust trust and safety team that take appropriate actions on a case by case basis, providing a host guarantee, and using a variety of tools that help identify problems before they occur. Papas also mentioned that the sharing economy has become more than connecting people to goods, it has become a way to connect people to people. He said that Airbnb used to only be about property and has become about people, which in turn, builds trust in the community.

Catherine Teitelbaum explained [Ask.fm](#)'s unique position in the space as the platform isn't necessarily about the sharing economy and more about sharing. She spoke about the struggle [Ask.fm](#) faced to promote trust and safety as many users were not having positive experiences and how they managed to improve that experience without losing what makes the website appealing. Teitelbaum also discussed how [Ask.fm](#) deals with regulations and keeping lawmakers and users informed about their policies.

One big theme that was discussed on the panel was setting best practices. Eichorn offered that for information companies the FTC recommends ensuring that security measures in place are appropriate to what they do. This should be based on the type of information the company is collecting, what they do with that information, the storage plan for the information, and the security of storage. Companies should also keep in mind privacy by design. Teitelbaum said that metrics concerning best practices are hard to generalize, but there are some common elements. Some of those elements, she said, include public standards for behavior, which may be terms of service or community guidelines, ensuring that users have the appropriate privacy tools, and make the kind of community that users want it to be.