Scenario: Sharing a Calendar with Vendors (Accepted)

Submitted by: Eve Maler

Online calendars are an example of personal data that is readily shared with other people in a manner that evokes VRM paradigms. Because calendar data is fairly volatile, static calendar snapshots are rarely shared; rather, a calendar feed is provided and authorized recipients can pull fresh calendar data as required. The data is often considered sensitive and is expected to be kept secure, hence “private URLs” and (minimal) ACL features offered by Google Calendar and other hosts.

In this scenario, personal online calendars are shared with “vendors” (online services) rather than other individuals, and they are shared in such a way as to allow permissioning and auditing from a central location rather than wherever the calendar is hosted. For the purposes of this scenario we’ll focus on sharing a single online calendar (such as for “work”, “soccer”, or “travel”) as a unitary Web resource, on an ongoing basis, with one or more individually-authorized recipients.

User interface mockups of a calendar-sharing interaction can be found in the initial blog post made about ProtectServe and, in somewhat more sophisticated form, slides from a speech made at an identity conference.

Following are some motivating circumstances in which calendar-sharing with vendors may make sense. (NOTE: All references to real vendors are hypothetical.)

Travel Calendar Sharing with Vendors

Alice, who is based in the Seattle area, has an online calendar that specifically contains business travel details such as flights, hotel stays, and car rentals, and since she travels quite frequently and often to international destinations, she wishes to share it with the following vendors:

- Her Visa credit-card company, Chase
  
  Often when she tries to charge European hotel stays to her Chase Visa, the credit card company denies the charges or asks the hotel desk clerk to put her on the phone to make sure it’s really her fitting around Europe and racking up big hotel bills. To let Chase know ahead of time what her travel plans are, Alice decides to share her travel calendar with them on a long-term basis so they can know ahead of time that it’s likely truly Alice who’s putting a Barcelona hotel stay on the card.

  Note that this recipient of her data already has a lot of quite personal and sensitive information about Alice, so she’s fairly comfortable giving them access to this data under certain conditions, such as refusing to accept third-party direct marketing.

  It must be possible for Alice to cut off the flow of travel calendar data to Chase (even though she continues to use that card for personal purchases) when Alice is told that she has to begin using a corporate AmEx card for all business travel purchases.

- The Seattle Times newspaper delivery service
  
  She’d like to avoid having to go to their website to put her newspaper delivery on hold every time she travels. By sharing a travel calendar with the delivery service that accurately reflects when no one will be at home, she saves one more to-do item as she prepares for each trip.

  This is data she would have had to share with the service “manually” anyway (by filling out a web form or using the phone), so she already had to trust the service not to rob her house while she’s away. It’s likely her full travel calendar contains more data than the service strictly needs, however.

- The U.S. Postal Service
  
  Instead of having to go to the Post Office or its website to fill out a mail hold form, she wants to let them know automatically. This is very similar to the Seattle Times situation, but in our project we need to solve for being able to attach different data-sharing policies and possibly have a different data-sharing lifespan between the two.

- Her mobile carrier, T-Mobile
  
  Alice would like to be offered the option to purchase pre-paid roaming minutes when she travels overseas. By sharing her travel calendar, she can let T-Mobile know she’ll be in Brazil next month and would welcome a special offer on mobile roaming. (Note that this use case has an element of volunteered personal information to it; by positively choosing to share her information, Alice gets new opportunities to transact with vendors.)

- Her travel data social-networking sites, Dopplr and TripIt
  
  Alice wants to keep all her “source” travel information in one place, but some of her friends and colleagues use different Web 2.0 sites to share such information. Rather than re-input all her travel destinations into Dopplr and TripIt, she’d like to let them pick up her planned locations and trip dates from her travel calendar.

  Today, Dopplr and other similar sites often use OAuth to share such information, but the actual data passed isn’t standardized, and the protocol for creating that long-term connection between the sites is OAuth. (See the forthcoming scenario Granting Service Access to a Photo Set for more observations on this flavor of scenario.)

Soliciting Timely Interactions from Vendors
Alice happens to work from home. Her typical work day is very busy, and she rarely has time to sit on hold when calling the various vendors in her life. She has a calendar that exposes the times during the day when she is free to accept a phone call or consider an invitation to a meeting or other event. She would like to share this information with the following vendors:

- Her TV cable carrier, Comcast

  Alice’s TV cable system has stopped working, and she needs to have a Comcast repairman come over to the house to fix it. She’s too busy to spend time jockeying with the customer support person on the phone about which three-hour period she might be free, so she decides to let Comcast get a limited view into her potential free times so they can send her an event invitation for a repair slot.

- Her general-practitioner doctor’s office

  Alice needs to talk to the medical assistant in her doctor’s office, but it’s impossible to get hold of her. The MA calls while Alice is on a telecon but the MA can’t leave a substantive message because of HIPAA laws/fears, and then when Alice calls back, of course the MA is in the middle of making a series of other calls and can’t be reached. It’s a “telephone tag” nightmare. Alice would like to share her free/busy times for the next few days so that the MA can at least pick a likely time to call her successfully.

Use Case: Separate Resource Host, Relationship Manager, and Recipient (Accepted)

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The most generic possible configuration of protocol endpoints solving this scenario is to have one service hosting the calendar in question, a different service getting permissioned read access to it, and yet a different service functioning as the authorization manager, all of them “in the cloud” from the perspective of the user and all operating on the open Internet rather than on a corporate intranet (since our user is an individual acting on her own behalf). This configuration is illustrated below.