Apple sent iPhone owners unwanted push notifications to promote Carpool Karaoke

Apple is starting to send unwanted push notifications to iPhone users, including ones designed to promote its own Carpool Karaoke show — even though Apple's TV app never expressly asks for permission to send promotional notifications, and even though Apple's App Store guidelines forbid developers from sending unsolicited promos.

We're not sure how many iPhone users received the notifications, but it looks like Apple has tried plugging its show at least twice in recent weeks: once on December 7th for an episode where Kendall Jenner and Hailey Baldwin grill each other using a lie detector test, and once on December 14 for an episode featuring joint singalongs with comedian Jason Sudeikis and the Muppets.

Some people aren't happy:

> *Why did Apple just send me a notification about an all new carpool karaoke, something I've never watched and have absolutely no interest in?*
>
> *— Mark Fletcher (@wingedpig)* December 14, 2018

> *Why did my phone just send a notification via the TV app that a new carpool karaoke episode featuring Kendall Jenner is out??*
>
> *1) I have never watched an episode of carpool karaoke*
> *2) I give no fucks about any Kardashian or Jenner.*

> *3) I have never used iPhone's tv app*
>
> *— (@meagan_wilcox) December 8, 2018*

With regard to the developer rules, Apple would appear to be violating the section of its App Store Guidelines – Section 4.5.3 –that expressly informs developers not to "spam, phish, or send unsolicited messages to customers." Apple did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Of course, this is just a notification setting issue that can be resolved rather quickly. You can either turn off all TV app notifications by swiping on the notification itself and tapping "manage," or you can dig into your notification settings through the general settings app and tailor them further from there.

The notification spam is not isolated to TV, either. If you're part of the iPhone Upgrade Program, you may have received a push notification you never expressly signed up for informing you about upgrading to the newest iPhone. Apple did that earlier this month, seemingly to promote the iPhone XR, although some users report having seen the notification last year too. While that is more understandable – if you're part of the program, it's helpful to know that you're eligible for an upgrade – the language around the notification and its suggestion that "your new iPhone is ready" seems specifically designed to get you to buy something. It's an ad disguised as a helpful tip.

Both of these new examples are less obtrusive than the most famous Apple push notification, which informed more than 500 million people that Apple had purchased and given them a free copy of U2's *Songs of Innocence*. That move, which reportedly cost Apple more than $100 million, proved so unpopular that Apple created a special removal process and support website to help angered users get rid of it for good. But it's these types of actions that undermine the trust Apple has built with

its customers.

> *If getting spam push notifications from @Apple about new episodes of Carpool Karaoke is a sign of the company's tv strategy, we're in for a rough ride.*
>
> *— Tim Schmitz (@TimSchmitz) December 7, 2018*

Now, it's understandable that Apple might want to plug its own show. Over the last couple of years, Apple CEO Tim Cook has said the company's services business is its future, as iPhone sales stagnate. Clearly, Apple wants to sell customers not just hardware that works in its ecosystem — like Airpods, the HomePod, and the Apple Watch — but also a bundle of software services it can charge a monthly subscription for.

It's already got Apple Music as a viable Spotify competitor, but Apple is years late to streaming TV, a market it's been trying to crack since it started selling TV shows and movies through iTunes. But I'd be curious if Apple is actually helping itself with these plugs. Even if these notifications are easy to dismiss, people tend to hate unsolicited junk on their phone.

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