Mozilla: VPN, Firefox 81 Plans and Add-ons

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- **No judgment digital definitions: What is the difference between a VPN and a web proxy?** [2]

  Virtual private networks (VPNs) and secure web proxies are solutions for better privacy and security online, but it can be confusing to figure out which one is right for you. Here?s a look at how these services protect you and how to choose the best option for when you?re online.

  [...]

  A secure web proxy works for tasks that you might do only in your browser. This can amount to a lot of activity like shopping, paying bills, logging into social media and reading emails. A secure web proxy serves as an intermediary between your browser and the internet. Your web browsing data will pass through a secure tunnel to the internet directly from your browser, masking your IP address, so the web server you are contacting doesn?t know exactly where you are in the world. And that makes you harder to track and target.

  A proxy is useful when you?re browsing the web on a public WiFi. When a proxy is enabled, it will stop eavesdroppers on the same network from spying on your browsing activity or reading your transactions on unencrypted sites. It sounds harmless, but public WiFi networks can be like a backdoor for hackers.

- **These Weeks in Firefox: Issue 78** [3]

  The tab modal print UI work is still in full swing, and is aiming for Firefox 81.

- **Wladimir Palant: A grim outlook on the future of browser add-ons** [4]

A few days ago Mozilla announced the release of their new Android browser. This release, dubbed ?Firefox Daylight,? is supposed to achieve nothing less than to ?revolutionize mobile browsing.?

[...]

What this text carefully avoids stating directly: that?s the only nine (as in: single-digit 9) add-ons which you will be able to install on Firefox for Android now. After being able to use thousands of add-ons before, this feels like a significant downgrade. Particularly given that there appears to be no technical reason why none of the other add-ons are allowed any more, it being merely a policy decision. I already verified that my add-ons can still run on Firefox for Android but aren?t allowed to, same should be true for the majority of other add-ons.

[...]

Before this release, Firefox was the only mobile browser to allow arbitrary add-ons. Chrome experimented with add-ons on mobile but never actually released this functionality. Safari implemented a halfhearted ad blocking interface, received much applause for it, but never made this feature truly useful or flexible. So it would seem that Firefox had a significant competitive advantage here. Why throw it away?

Unfortunately, supporting add-ons comes at a considerable cost. It isn?t merely the cost of developing and maintaining the necessary functionality, there is also the performance and security impact of browser extensions. Mozilla has been struggling with this for a while. The initial solution was reviewing all extensions before publication. It was a costly process which also introduced delays, so by now all add-ons are published immediately but are still supposed to be reviewed manually eventually.

Mozilla is currently facing challenges both in terms of market share and financially, the latter being linked to the former. This once again became obvious when Mozilla laid off a quarter of its workforce a few weeks ago. In the past, add-ons have done little to help Mozilla achieve a breakthrough on mobile, so costs being cut here isn?t much of a surprise. And properly reviewing nine extensions is certainly cheaper than keeping tabs on a thousand.

[Moz/FF](...)

Links:
[1] http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/118
[2] https://blog.mozilla.org/firefox/vpn-or-proxy/
[3] https://blog.nightly.mozilla.org/2020/08/31/these-weeks-in-firefox-issue-78/
[4] https://palant.info/2020/08/31/a-grim-outlook-on-the-future-of-browser-add-ons/