



Hey Apple, it looks like "1984" all over again. But who's Big Brother now?

**A response from Qustodio CEO, Eduardo Cruz, to Apple's public statement
against parental control apps**

In 1984, Apple rocked the world with its famous "1984" Superbowl [advertisement](#) showing a woman with sledgehammer setting free the dulled masses from 'Big Brother', a fictional character in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* who wields total power for its own sake over the people. Today, in 2019, we see that Apple has become what it once set out to destroy. It is wielding its power over businesses and consumers, playing gatekeeper and referee, hurting companies and eliminating consumer choice.

That's why last Thursday, April 25th, we filed a complaint against Apple with the European Commission, to help spark a much needed investigation into anti-competitive practices on the App Store. Our complaint joins other similar actions recently launched against Apple by companies such as Spotify, Kaspersky, and independently by the competition authorities in the Netherlands.

When we think back to our peaceful relationship with Apple over many years, and about the creative ethos their brand promotes, it is both surprising and sad that we've been forced to take this step. For years we championed our product category and in the process helped millions of families worldwide find better ways to deal with digital safety and device usage balance.

Everything was fine until the introduction of Apple's Screen Time service last September. At that time, Apple systematically began hostilities against companies in our category with the ultimate goal of eliminating competition and limiting customer choice to Apple services only. Apple's actions ranged from stepping over existing trademarks, e.g. Screen Time, a trademark owned by one existing player in the category, to delisting apps from companies that failed to take legal defensive action, e.g., OurPact and Mobicip.

The media and the public response has been overwhelmingly positive toward our action and toward the efforts made by other European companies trying to force Apple to play fair. People want choice and are starting to understand that they should fear companies like Apple having too much control over every aspect of their lives.

Apple took notice of our action and instead of offering solutions, quickly issued a [public statement](#) last Sunday that is a smokescreen full of information that is inaccurate, insulting and ironic. Apple's reaction has been designed to do the following: create fear of parental control products by claiming companies in the category cannot be trusted; falsely accuse companies of wrongdoing by alleging we all got caught using unauthorized technologies; and, lastly, try to dissociate the launch and timing of Apple's Screen Time from their systematic actions against apps in the category.

Apple states that using Mobile Device Management technologies (MDM) is "a clear violation of App Store policies". The use of MDM in the App Store was something never banned by Apple until the release of their competitive Screen Time service. In fact, Qustodio had been using this technology for years with explicit continued app submission approval from Apple. As of today, MDM is still not specified in Apple's official guidelines as something unauthorized. In our interactions with Apple, they always refer to a vague and open-ended guideline known as "2.5.1" which states "Apps should use APIs and frameworks for their intended purposes".

It is plain to see that this guideline has been designed by Apple to be used as a clean slate to ban anything at any time. To other fellow app developers out there, we hope you can recognize the dangers of Apple's guideline games, because today it is us, but tomorrow it will be you.

Apple's attempt to give specific purpose to existing open technologies such as MDM is both outrageous and a cause for great concern. For instance the technology powering the internet today was originally a military communication network, the web was a tool for academia invented at CERN, and mobile text messages were first used as a share price alert system for business people. Were mobile phones originally intended to run apps? They were not. Things evolve, and that's natural and positive.

By exerting this type of manipulation on the purpose of technologies such as MDM, Apple is blatantly calling any technology that is not used for its original intended purpose, including the internet itself, a risk.

Apple also claims that MDM could be used by “hackers for malicious purposes.” Again, there are a million technologies on earth that could be used in the wrong way by the wrong people. To imply that everyone who uses MDM is doing something wrong is not just false, it is damaging. Qustodio is a respected, long-standing business that follows regulations, respects the privacy of its users, pays taxes, and creates valuable jobs. We have just been using MDM technology safely for years to help parents control screen times and limit apps, all with Apple's consent.

Moreover Apple is inferring that only they have the right to decide who gets to use some technologies and who doesn't. If MDM is as dangerous as Apple suddenly claims it to be, why not shut it down completely across product categories and not just for parental controls? Additionally, if safety is such a great concern to Apple, why not share the APIs used in Apple's own Screen Time competitive service and instantly make the environment safer and open for everyone?

Apple closes its response with a carefully crafted statement to parents: “No one, except you, should have unrestricted access to manage your child's device.” This statement falsely implies that companies like Qustodio have all the access in the world to your child's activities. This is far from the truth. Ironically, in the world as defined by Apple, it is actually Apple who has unrestricted access to your child's device. Which tools parents want to use and whom they want to trust should be up to parents, not Apple.

It's clear through Apple's anti-competitive actions on the app store and its spreading of misinformation in the press that it is doing everything it can to purge rivals as it moves with full force into news, music, video, and parental control

categories. Companies and governments now need to take stronger steps to curb Apple's unprecedented power. Qustodio's ultimate goal is to provide parents with the best digital safety and wellbeing app for their children, and to continue pioneering the parental control space, as we have been doing all along since 2012.

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