

VLP Partner Melissa Krasnow Quoted in San Francisco Chronicle Article “FamilyTreeNow Shreds Privacy, But Founder Remains Elusive”

VLP Partner Melissa Krasnow spoke with the *San Francisco Chronicle* for the article “FamilyTreeNow Shreds Privacy, But Founder Remains Elusive.” The article reported on recent criticism the website FamilyTreeNow.com has received regarding the amount of personal information that it provides online.

FamilyTreeNow is one of many people-search websites that compile personal data from public documents. The article noted that many such search engines offer cursory glimpses into people’s lives in the form of reports — like a virtual background check made up of information drawn from birth certificates, marriage licenses, arrest records, court records and credit information.

But information from public documents is often enough to paint an uncomfortably complete picture of a person.

Ms. Krasnow said: “This is a huge privacy issue. Sure, you can look someone up in the phone book. You can look someone up by requesting government documents, but when all that information is being made readily available, with the amount of fraud that can happen, it’s a bad idea.”

Ms. Krasnow went on to explain, “One issue is while you could argue that this information could otherwise be available online, (websites like FamilyTreeNow) make it very readily available and public. You can take different pieces and put them together to pose a real security threat.”

She also noted that the most responsible way to operate a website such as this would be to flip the script and require people to consent to having their information displayed.

[Click here](#) to view the entire article.