

Using vendor sentiment to improve the Deceptor program

What we learned
How we adjusted
What you can expect

19 June 2018

AppEsteem[®]



The process we used to improve

- Harvest quotes from CSA Deceptor Report
- Derive vendor sentiment
- Identify questions to test with our data
- Analyze data-driven answers
- Drive changes to our programs

Deriving sentiment

- We used vendor quotes as our input
- We avoided conclusions and recommendations



Vendor sentiment on how we change requirements

- Sentiment: Vendors want proof we're not pushing our own agenda, but only reflecting a common AV stance
- Our Assertions
 - We work hard to reflect a common AV stance
 - We work with AVs before adding or modifying Deceptor requirements
 - We have processes and tools to help vendors understand Deceptor requirements, and we give direct guidance on violations
- Question to test: Do AVs enforce against Deceptor violations?

- "more deceptor criteria [being introduced] without input"
- "things have gotten subjective"
- "concerns that there is no approval process or communication to make determinations. No critical mass achieved to make something a deceptor criteria."
- "the way ACRs are created and moved into deceptor status is problematic."
- "AE says [certain products] are malicious, but [INTERVIEWEE] doesn't see it that way; that is why there is a PUP program."
- "[Deceptor program] should be based on industry rules, not AppEsteem rules."

Vendor sentiment on how we target

- Sentiment: Vendors want transparency into how/why we hunt and list Deceptors
- Our assertions
 - Hunting team doesn't get lost-sales data
 - We encourage all Deceptor submissions
 - We hunt for apps we believe cause the most consumer damage
 - We hunt apps that use deceptive practices to unfairly compete
- Question to test: Does informing instead of listing Deceptor apps drive faster change?

- Multiple respondents expressed their belief that AppEsteem specifically targets companies or classes of software in a manner designed to generate business or punish those unwilling to work with AppEsteem.
- At least one respondent, who was being pitched by AppEsteem to become a client, reported being asked which of their competitors they would "like to see on the deceptor list."
- Other respondents reported conversations during which AppEsteem identified specific companies it was considering targeting as part of the deceptor program without any sound basis or justification.

Vendor sentiment on how we market

- Sentiment: Vendors hate the idea of us monetizing the hunt
- Our Assertions
 - We don't charge Deceptors to get off our active list
 - Our app certification is free
 - We don't offer paid services to apps who won't certify
- Question to test: Do hunted Deceptor apps become customers?

- "Deceptor program is a scare tactic in itself."
- "[Deceptor program is] a tactic to convert as many people as possible into a paid program."
- "[Deceptor program is] a huge tool for business development [for AppEsteem]"
- "[Deceptor program] is a horrible way of generating customers."
- "No question AE is using the [deceptor] program for business development."
- the "ultimate scareware tactic" to generate customers.
- "Sell me on the merits of your certification program; don't threaten me into being a customer."

Vendor sentiment on how we execute

- Sentiment: Vendors want assurance that we're not abusing our power
 - Our Assertions
 - We are detailed with Deceptor violations
 - Our pricing for Premium Services is public
 - We hold public calls before Deceptor campaigns, and host bi-weekly industry calls
 - Question to test: Are there additional ways we can be transparent?
- "Implementation and execution are problems. Lack of consistency and transparency."
 - Some respondents were under the mistaken impression that the CSA had endorsed AppEsteem and/or were providing oversight or dispute resolution for AppEsteem and the deceptor program

Twelve months of data

April 2017 – March 2018; Measured 31 May 2018

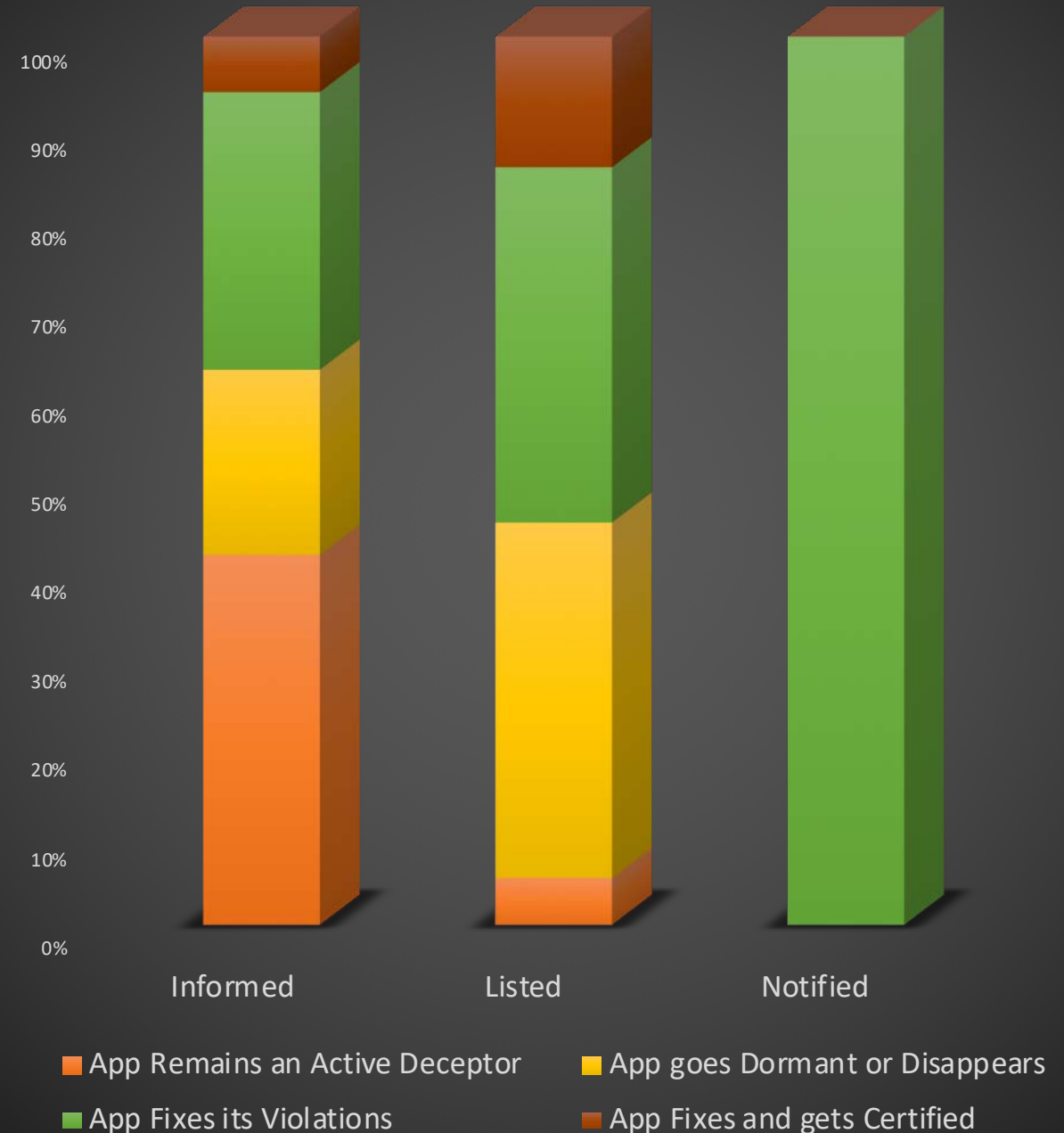
- 847 hunted apps and 602 app certification reviews
- We hunted 218 active and unregistered Deceptors that fit into these two scenarios:
 - We informed 48 and never listed them
 - We listed 170 without informing them
- 54 apps registered for Deceptor Notification
 - We notified 16 with a 30-day notice
- We certified 114 apps and tracked their provenance
- We gathered qualitative feedback from customer interviews



How Active Deceptors Responded

- We **informed**, said we would list but then never listed, 48 unregistered apps
- We **listed** without informing 170 unregistered apps
- We **notified** 16 apps who registered with us

Deceptor Response to our Actions



Where did certified apps come from?

- All apps received free certification
- Half of certified apps purchased premium services
- A third of certified apps originated as hunted Deceptors

	Informed (3%)	Listed (31%)	Notified (0%)	Not via Deceptors (67%)
Free Certification Customers (52%)	0%	16%	0%	36%
Premium Service Customers (48%)	3%	15%	0%	31%

Customer transparency interviews

- “AppEsteem will listen more if we join our voices.”
- “It’s hard to stand up to AppEsteem when your app is under duress.”
- “Somebody needs to tell us if AppEsteem is acting fairly.”
- “We’re invested in AppEsteem’s success, and we need to defend them.”



Findings

	Informed n=48	Listed n=170	Notified n=16
App Remains Active	42%	5%	
App Goes Dormant	21%	40%	
App Fixes	37%	55%	100%
App Fixes and Certifies	6%	15%	
% of certified	3%	31%	

Do AVs enforce against Deceptor violations?

Yes but alignment is measured, not stated

Does informing instead of listing Deceptor apps drive faster change?

No – many informed Deceptors continue consumer abuse

Do hunted Deceptor apps become customers?

Not very often

Are there additional ways we can be transparent?

Yes, through an app vendor non-profit

What if we stopped our Deceptor list?

- Almost everybody loses
 - Apps won't know what to fix
 - AVs won't keep up
 - Consumers will be abused by Deceptors
- Only Deceptors win

We believe our approach is best for consumers, consumer-respecting apps, AVs, and our business





CleanApps.org will add transparency through industry insight and input

- They're of, by, and for the app vendors
- They're independent from us, but they know us well
- They're operational with bylaws, an elected board of app vendors, members, and a full-time Executive Director
- They're already adding value with notifications, guidance
- **We're aligned with supporting consumer-respecting apps**



We're making four big changes

- Align with AV's formalization program
- Expand Deceptor notification program, stop informing Deceptors
- Support CleanApps.org
- Find more certified opportunities



What you can expect from these changes

Align with AV's formalization program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal ratification• More Deceptor flags, less Certified false positives
Expand Deceptor notification program, stop informing Deceptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PR campaigns to reach more app vendors• Help for consumer-respecting apps
Support CleanApps.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transparency and insight reports• Deceptor campaign notifications and advice
Find more certified opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More monetization partnerships



Example certified app monetization opportunity

EverCore
By BlackSwan



- Result of two years of strategizing
- BlackSwan **manages risk** by requiring certification for offer, call center, and partner apps
- First set of partners apps in our certification pipeline

Be aware of our Deceptor campaigns...

Deceptor Campaign	Goal we want to achieve
Bundlers (Apr 2018)	Stop deceptive offers in bundlers and download managers
Extensions (Jun 2018)	Stop search and bundling abuse in browser extensions
Free Scans (Dec 2018)	Stop urgency in free scans that require paid fixes
Affiliates	Stop bad affiliates, hold apps accountable
Cloaking	Stop vendor and source misrepresentation

Free: Get help fixing your app's Deceptor violations
Free: Register your app for Deceptor notifications
Free: Certify your app and show the world it's safe

