

Online Me2B Relationships

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#Me2BRelationship

IN A NUTSHELL

Me2B Relationships in the digital world have even more layers than those in the physical world. In addition, our relationship with connected technology includes a set of “hidden affiliates” (third party integrations) that most of us are not aware of. This guide describes how these relationships – conscious or not – emerge as we interact with digital technologies.

In Flash Guide #4, we introduced Me2B Relationships and examined how they may be experienced in the physical world. In this Flash Guide, we’ll explore Me2B Relationships in the digital world.

All Me2B Relationships have a number of different facets. We introduced this layering in the Flash Guide #4, explaining the difference between the relationship our typical “Me,” Mia, has with a retailer or brand, and the “Me2P” relationship Mia has with a particular product. This same kind of layering exists—with even more layers—in the digital world.

Let’s walk through a fictional account of Mia unboxing a brand new iPhone:

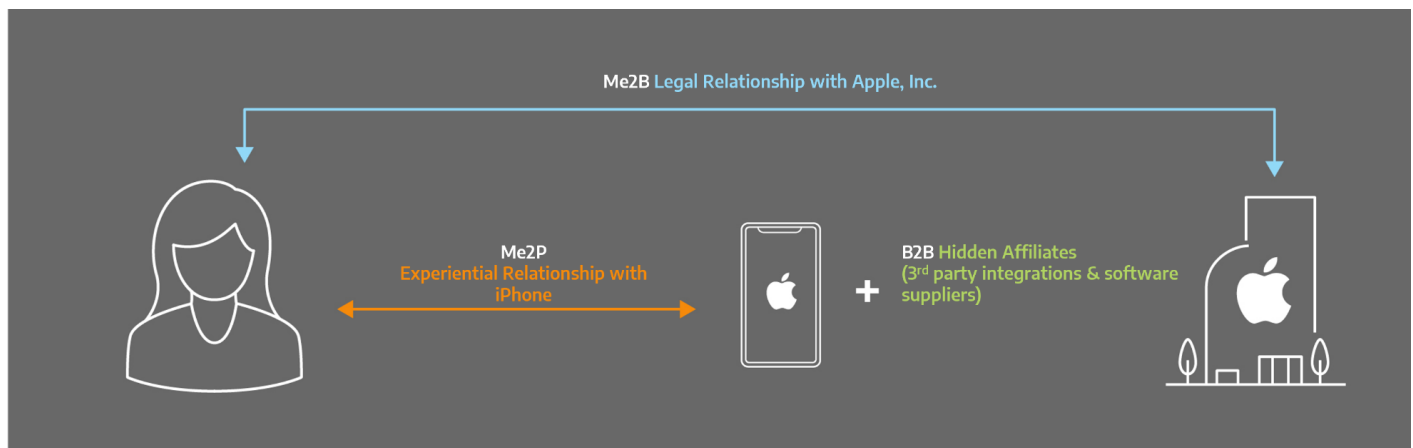


Figure 6.1

Stage 1: The first thing that happens is that Mia powers up her phone and is immediately required to agree to the Apple Terms of Service—i.e. to enter into a Me2B Legal Relationship with the company (or “B”), Apple. As Mia uses the phone, she develops a disposition (love/hate, e.g.) towards the phone; she has an experiential relationship with the phone, not dissimilar to the experiential relationship she has with the OXO brand containers described in FG #4. This relationship with her phone is a Me2P or “Me-to-Product” relationship.

There is a critical difference, however, between connected technology like Mia’s iPhone and static products like her OXO containers. Connected technology relies on a number of integrated third-party technologies,

depicted as “B2B Hidden Affiliates” in Figure 6.1. These entities may have access to significant pieces of information about Mia and her usage of the phone. So in essence, Mia is having a relationship with those hidden affiliates—she just doesn’t know it.

Stage 2: As Mia starts configuring her phone, she decides to install the Chrome browser app:

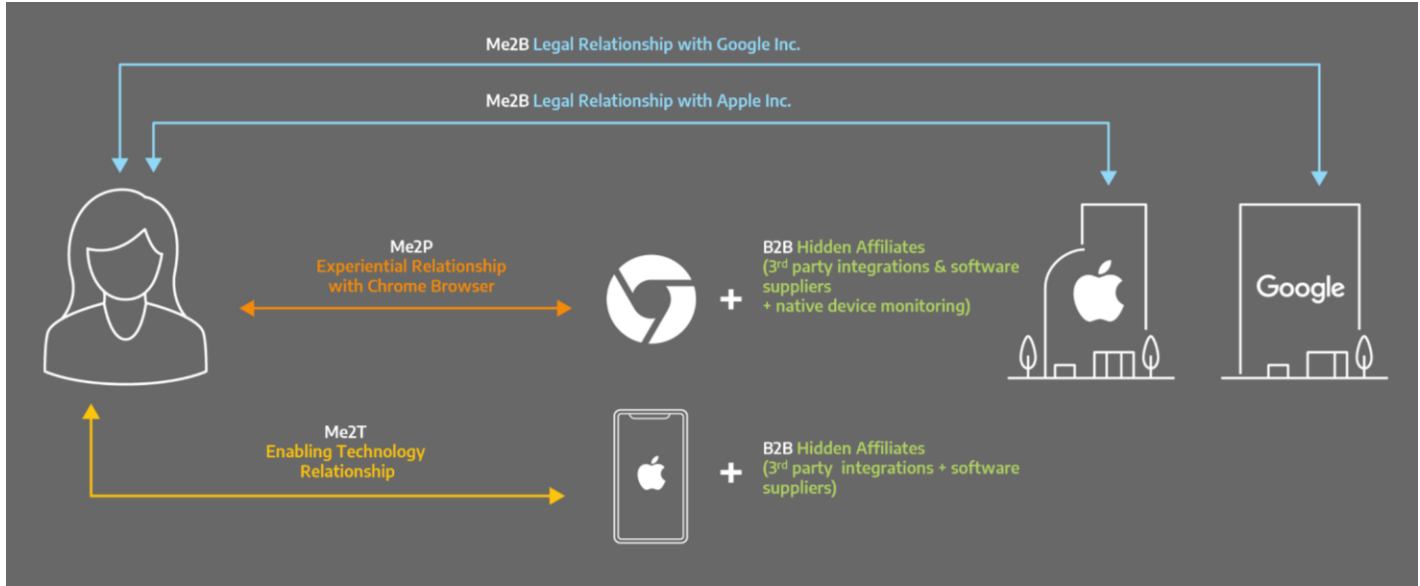


Figure 6.2

Similar to Stage 1, as soon as Mia opens the browser, she is required to establish a Me2B Legal Relationship with Google, LLC. And over time, as she uses the browser, she builds a Me2P relationship with the browser itself. She is aware that she is using the browser—essentially having an ongoing dialogue with the app. Note that, even though she’s using the phone, it’s not at the forefront of her consciousness, and it has become an Enabling Technology Relationship (or Me2T relationship). We reserve the term “Me2P” for the app or website with which the individual is directly interacting. Finally, in this stage, notice that the list of B2B Hidden Affiliates continues to grow—this time, with all the third parties included in the browser app.

Stage 3: Mia opens the Instagram website from the Chrome browser:

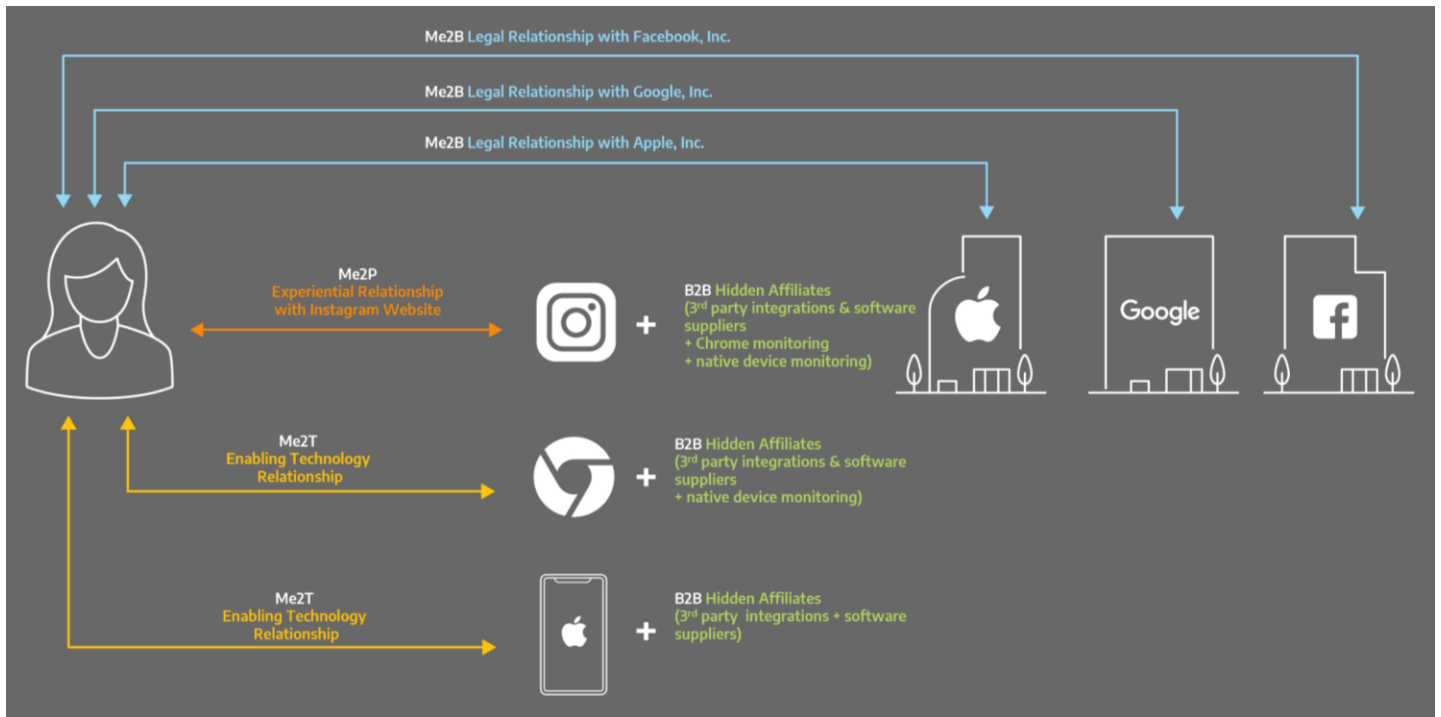


Figure 6.3

Similar to the previous stages, Mia is required to enter into a legal relationship with the company responsible for Instagram (Facebook). Her interaction with Instagram occupies her attention and she is in a two-way dialogue with the website. The list of B2B Hidden Affiliates continues to grow, and the browser is demoted to an Enabling Technology, like the phone.

With just a few steps, Mia has developed a network of entities with whom she is in some kind of relationship—wittingly or not.

A word about B2B Hidden Affiliates: while these are depicted in this explanation, we do not consider these to be Me2B Relationships since Mia has no direct relationship with those entities. We will go deeper into the network of hidden affiliates in a subsequent Flash Guide.

Mapping Me2B Relationships to GDPR Terminology

The Me2B Respectful Tech Specification leverages GDPR terminology and concepts, for consistency and clarity.ⁱ We acknowledge that the GDPR’s term for people, “Data Subject”, is not particularly empowering from a semantic perspective, but it has the benefit of being clear and legally explicit. There is no doubt that people are more than “data subjects”. The terminology we’ve introduced above maps to GDPR terms as follows:

Me2B TERM	GDPR TERM
Mia	Data Subject
Business or “B” in a Me2B Legal Relationship	Data Controller
Product or “P” in a M2P Relationship	Data Controller
Technology or “T” in a Me2T Relationship	Data Controller
B2B Hidden Affiliate	Data Processor

ⁱ See GDPR Definitions here: <https://gdpr-info.eu/art-4-gdpr/>