

## Written evidence submitted by Rise.global (Leaderboarded Ltd) (BIG0090)

I'd like to focus the committee's attention on monopolistic data practices by large firms around the sharing of the big data that they hold on consumers. What is appalling is that, in cases where the consumer would like to pass on their personal data, held on the platform, to a third party, the platform restricts and prevents the consumer from being able to do this. It achieves this by preventing third party application developers from accessing a user's personal data on the user's behalf.

For example, LinkedIn does not allow its users to share even the most simple analytics information (how many current connections they hold) with third party applications (who they might choose to manage the analytics data for them.) This prevents the creation of personal analytics dashboard applications to help users keep track of their growth in business connections each month.

Indeed, my company Leaderboarded ([www.rise.global](http://www.rise.global)) previously sold this service as an add-on for LinkedIn users but is no longer able to do so since LinkedIn [closed this part of its public "API"](#). Our subsequent requests for "partner status" with LinkedIn and attempts at a dialogue over offering added value services have not gone anywhere.

If the committee is seeking to support UK entrepreneurship in the area of Big Data, I would ask the committee to examine the data practices of large social networks that enjoy **effective data monopolies**. These data monopolies are unassailable due to network effects: the reality is that "I have to use LinkedIn because most English speaking business contacts use LinkedIn" – business professionals can hardly switch platforms to use, for example Xing.com, instead ( Xing popular among German speaking business) as their English speaking professional contacts are not active on that platform.

Social networks that enjoy data monopolies should be strongly encouraged to provide adequate facilities for third parties to develop apps for their niche of customers. This allows the third parties to leverage a portion of the data that those customers store on the social network. This should be possible in a way that does not require a specific partnership agreement. This is known as an "Open API."

I would argue that once a network reaches a certain scale – say 10 million UK users or 100 million worldwide users, it should be classified as a public utility and therefore must offer an open API. Not to insist on this, is to cement data monopolies in place for generations to come.

*January 2016*