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# The Reviews Are in for Zuck: His Big Performance Sounded Scripted, But Is That Bad?

Attorneys and other experts weighed in on Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's big week in D.C., explaining how some facets of his testimony proved effective, while others may not have worked as well.

By Caroline Spiezio | April 12, 2018

After two days and 12 hours of testimony, [Facebook](#)



***Mark Zuckerberg, founder and chief executive officer of Facebook, testifies before a joint hearing of the Senate Judiciary and Commerce, Science, and***

***Transportation Committees, regarding the unauthorized gathering of millions of Facebook users’ data by consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, on Capitol Hill, on Tuesday, April 10, 2018. Photo: Diego M. Radzinski/ALM***

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[\(https://www.law.com/2018/04/10/critical-mass-the-two-faces-of-facebook-plus-employee-arbitration-agreements-are-not-one-size-fits-all/\)](https://www.law.com/2018/04/10/critical-mass-the-two-faces-of-facebook-plus-employee-arbitration-agreements-are-not-one-size-fits-all/) founder [Mark Zuckerberg](https://www.law.com/legaltechnews/2018/04/12/facebook-collected-users-text-and-calls-logs-will-the-ftc-act/) (<https://www.law.com/legaltechnews/2018/04/12/facebook-collected-users-text-and-calls-logs-will-the-ftc-act/>) can finally breathe a sigh of relief—he’s out of the hot seat.

The [social media company’s](https://www.law.com/2018/04/11/inside-track-zucks-in-house-entourage-gdpr-confusion-salesforce-social-justice/) (<https://www.law.com/2018/04/11/inside-track-zucks-in-house-entourage-gdpr-confusion-salesforce-social-justice/>) 33-year-old CEO spent Tuesday and Wednesday on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., answering questions from legislators about [Facebook’s](https://www.law.com/delbizcourt/2018/04/10/facebook-cambridge-analytica-hit-with-delaware-class-action/) (<https://www.law.com/delbizcourt/2018/04/10/facebook-cambridge-analytica-hit-with-delaware-class-action/>) Cambridge Analytica scandal, which exposed more than 80 million platform users’ private data, and may have had influence over the U.K. Brexit vote and the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Litigation consultants and lawyers who have followed the Zuckerberg hearings said the Facebook boss did relatively well under pressure, but they also said there’s room for improvement.

“This was his chance to persuade a broad audience that America does not need to fear Facebook,” said Matthew Prewitt, a partner at [Schiff Hardin](https://www.law.com/law-firm-profile?id=265&name=Schiff-Hardin) (<https://www.law.com/law-firm-profile?id=265&name=Schiff-Hardin>), in an email. “He missed that opportunity because he was too focused on delivering a technically competent performance that followed word for word what he had rehearsed with his attorneys.”

Zuckerberg entered the hearing with a stack of notes (<https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/10/17222546/facebook-mark-zuckerberg-senate-hearing-notes-cambridge-analytica-privacy>), and seemed to return frequently to statements about Facebook's positive influence, its desire to change and taking personal responsibility for its mistakes.

Geri Satin, a senior trial consultant and co-founder at Focus Litigation Consulting, says Zuckerberg was thorough, and though he sounded semiscripted, that's not necessarily bad.

As CEO of a large company, she says, Zuckerberg had a weighty responsibility to represent Facebook and its thousands of employees in a positive light. Going off script could risk that. She says his ability to stay calm and on track was crucial, even if it came off as less authentic.

"He stuck to his script. He almost stated mantra-like that his company made mistakes and they needed to take a broader approach and needed to take action," she said. "He made the conversation about action and fixes instead of pointing fingers. That was the most effective aspect."

But one of his go-to answers to legislators' questions, "my team will get back to you," wasn't helping Zuckerberg's case, according to Satin. His various ways of telling questioners that he didn't have knowledge about his company on hand could have hurt his credibility, she said.

"Saying things like, 'I'm not prepared to answer that at this time,' even if that's the truth and an authentic answer, it can lead your audience or jurors to become quite skeptical," she added.

Robert Gerchen, a senior consultant for Litigation Insights, a litigation consultancy, took the opposite stance. In his eyes, Zuckerberg's "my team will get back to you" refrain was an honest one that could boost trust. Gerchen said this type of response

avoided the alternative—an awkward, half-baked answer—and instead delivered a promise for more action from his team at Facebook.

When working with witnesses, Gerchen tells them to “be confident in what you don’t know,” and to not be afraid of honesty when there’s no informative answer to be given at the time. Zuckerberg’s response, Gerchen added, also closed the line on further questioning in areas he was not prepared to speak about.

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