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Tech Decoded

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Hello. When a company is the victim of a ransomware attack, the official advice is not to pay the hackers. Yet, faced with severe operational disruption, firms often do negotiate – the latest being the company behind Canvas, the popular online learning platform, which was targeted late last month. Below, I explore why it's such a dilemma and when, if ever, it makes sense to pay. Plus, as the Musk v Altman trial wraps up, we look at five things we learnt from the case and explore how smart glasses became a hit despite growing privacy concerns.

THE DOWNLOAD

A dilemma for CEOs: pay up or fight back?



Students at almost 9,000 universities worldwide were affected by the Canvas hack. Credit: Getty Images

The hack at Canvas, which began on 29 April, **caused chaos for students** at thousands of universities and colleges worldwide.

Many lost access to their work and some were unable to sit online exams. In addition, the group claiming responsibility threatened to release data involving around 275 million individuals unless the institutions paid a ransom.

Faced with such pressure, it's perhaps unsurprising that Instructure – the company behind Canvas – decided to reach **an "agreement" with the hackers.**

It said the gang had deleted the data and promised not to extort any students or institutions, although there's no guarantee. Instructure admitted there was "never complete certainty when dealing with cyber criminals".

Law enforcement agencies such as the FBI have long advised victims of ransomware attacks not to cave in to hackers' demands, arguing it just fuels further attacks.

Yet faced with severe operational disruption, **many feel they have little choice** – and paying may seem the more rational option given the **potential cost of a shutdown.**

Rob Demain, CEO at UK cyber-security firm e2e-assure, empathises with this desire but says that victims who pay usually don't recover all their data and are often hit by a second subsequent ransomware attack.

He told Tech Decoded organisations should only pay if there's a "genuine incentive", such as preventing a **risk to life** or public safety.

Lawmakers want to crack down but are hesitant to bring in blanket bans on paying ransoms. Instead, the UK plans to ban public institutions from paying after a series of **damaging attacks on hospitals**, while the US strictly forbids payments to state-sponsored hackers or those subject to sanctions.

Demain believes being prepared is the best protection, as it can significantly limit the impact of an attack.

"What matters is how quickly you can detect and disrupt. By the time a ransom demand appears on screen, the opportunity to limit the damage has long passed."

The download: *Organisations worried about ransomware attacks should invest in cyber-resilience, ensuring they have strong detection, containment and back-up systems that enable them to remain operational during a crisis.*

TOP STORIES



Claim, counter-claim and tech's seedy side exposed

As the jury deliberates, **Lily Jamali** looks at what we've learnt from Elon Musk's lawsuit against OpenAI boss Sam Altman.

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WhatsApp launches 'incognito' chatbot feature

Neither a user's messages nor the bot's responses will be monitored if the feature is turned on, but some have concerns.

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Texas accuses Netflix of spying on users

The streaming giant has been sued over claims it collects personal data without consent, but Netflix rejects the allegations.

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Thousands of Waymos recalled over flood risks

It follows an incident in Texas where an empty vehicle entered a flooded road and was swept into a creek.

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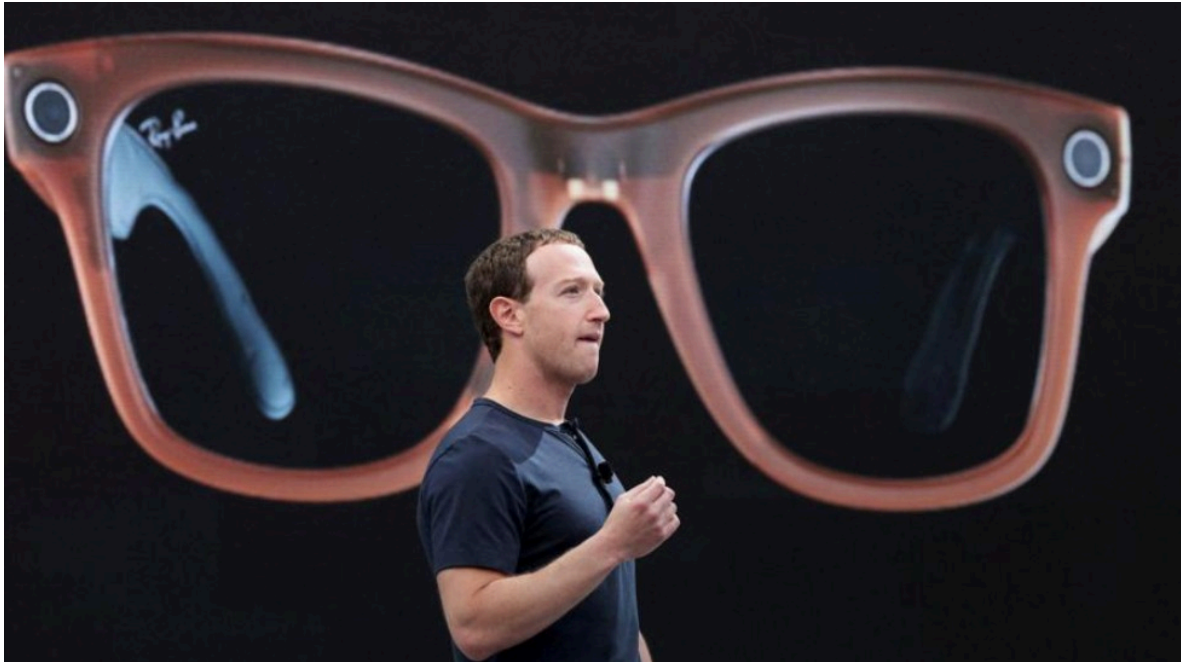
'I've seen workshops that are nigh on dust-free'

From high-powered dust filters to advanced safety features, tech has transformed modern woodworking.

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SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Smart glasses are a hit, despite the risks



Meta's Ray-Ban smart glasses are currently the most popular on the market. Credit: Reuters

Privacy concerns about "smart glasses" seem to be mounting, with numerous reports of men surreptitiously filming women while wearing the devices. Yet some of the biggest technology companies in the world are poised to sell many millions of pairs in the coming years. **Kali Hays** explores [the risks and benefits as this tech gains popularity](#).

PODCAST PICK



The AI pothole hunter

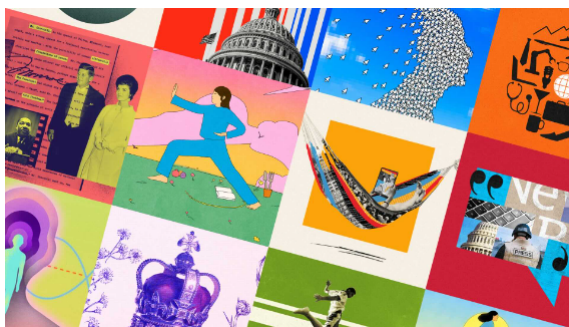
Drivers and cyclists know the dangers of potholes, but a Swedish firm thinks AI could help us avoid them.

[Find out more](#)

And finally...

Waymo has finally arrived in London, but not everyone is happy about it. The driverless car firm apologised after one of its vehicles got stuck in a cul-de-sac in the early hours, waking residents with a "ridiculous mixture of a reversing noise and siren sound". [Watch what happened here](#).

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