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United States District Court
Northern District of California

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

RONALD SGARLATA, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

PAYPAL HOLDINGS, INC., et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. [17-cv-06956-EMC](#)

**ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS’
MOTION TO DISMISS SECOND
AMENDED COMPLAINT**

Docket No. 79

Defendants PayPal Holdings, Inc., TIO Networks ULC, TIO Networks USA, Inc., Daniel H. Schulman, John D. Rainey, Jr., and John Kunze (collectively, “Defendants”) move to dismiss Plaintiffs Michael Eckert and Edwin Bells’ (“Plaintiffs”) second amended complaint (“SAC”). Plaintiffs bring this action individually and on behalf of all others who purchased PayPal securities between November 10, 2017 and December 1, 2017 (the “Class Period”). Plaintiffs claim that they purchased PayPal securities at allegedly inflated prices during the Class Period. The Court previously dismissed Plaintiffs’ first amended complaint (“FAC”) with leave to amend. Docket No. 78. The SAC continues to allege claims for relief against Defendants under 10(b), 10b–5, and 20(a).¹

Pending before the Court is Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss (“Mot.”) the SAC pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Rule 12(b)(6), Rule 9(b), and the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act (“PSLRA”). Docket No. 79.

¹ In contrast with the FAC, Plaintiffs have not named Hamed Shahbazi (who served as Vice President of Bill Pay for PayPal during the Class Period) as a defendant.

I. **BACKGROUND**

A. **Factual Background**²

“On February 14, 2017, PayPal announced an agreement to purchase TIO Networks Corporation for \$233 million.” *Id.* ¶ 3. “TIO is a bill-pay management company that processed roughly \$7 billion in bill payments on behalf of fourteen (14) million customers in 2016.” *Id.*

Plaintiffs’ claims arise from press releases that they allege were materially misleading. On November 10, 2017, Defendants TIO and PayPal issued press releases (the “November Announcement”). The November Announcement read as follows:

PayPal Holdings, Inc. (Nasdaq: PYPL) announced that TIO Networks (TIO), a publicly traded company PayPal acquired in July 2017, has suspended operations to protect TIO’s customers. This suspension of services is a result of PayPal’s discovery of security vulnerabilities on the TIO platform and issues with TIO’s data security program that do not adhere to PayPal’s information security standards. TIO is not integrated into PayPal’s platform. The PayPal platform is not impacted by this situation in any way and PayPal’s customers’ data remains secure.

Upon the recent discovery of this vulnerability on the TIO platform, PayPal took action by initiating an internal investigation of TIO and bringing in additional third-party cybersecurity expertise to review TIO’s bill payment platform. A focus of the investigation will also include TIO’s practices and representations prior to the acquisition.

Concurrent with this press release in November, TIO posted the following statement on its website:

On Friday, November 10, 2017, TIO Networks suspended our operations due to the discovery of security vulnerabilities on the TIO platform and issues with TIO’s data security program. While we apologize for any inconvenience this suspension of services may cause, the security of TIO’s systems and the protection of TIO’s customers are our highest priorities. We are actively investigating this situation and working with appropriate authorities to safeguard TIO customers.

TIO also sent the following message to some of its customers:

On November 10, PayPal announced that TIO Networks, a publicly traded company that PayPal acquired in July 2017, suspended operations to protect TIO’s customers. This suspension of services is a result of PayPal’s discovery of security vulnerabilities on the

² The facts between the FAC and the SAC are largely unchanged, with minor amendments.

1 TIO platform and issues with TIO's data security program that do
not adhere to PayPal's information security standards.

2 FAC ¶ 40. Then, on December 1, 2017, TIO and PayPal released a statement disclosing that, in
3 fact, a breach had occurred and that the confidential information of 1.6 million users had been
4 potentially compromised. *Id.* ¶ 5. The press release dated December 1, 2017 (the "December
5 Announcement"), read as follows:

6 PayPal Holdings, Inc. (Nasdaq: PYPL) today announced an update
7 on the suspension of operations of TIO Networks (TIO), a publicly
8 traded payment processor PayPal acquired in July 2017. A review of
9 TIO's network has identified a potential compromise of personally
10 identifiable information for approximately 1.6 million customers.
The PayPal platform is not impacted in any way, as the TIO systems
are completely separate from the PayPal network, and PayPal's
customers' data remains secure.

11 As announced on November 10, PayPal suspended the operations of
12 TIO to protect customer data as part of an ongoing investigation of
13 security vulnerabilities of the TIO platform. This ongoing
14 investigation has identified evidence of unauthorized access to
15 TIO's network, including locations that stored personal information
16 of some of TIO's customers and customers of TIO billers. As a
17 result, PayPal is taking steps to protect affected customers.

18 TIO has also begun working with the companies it services to notify
19 potentially affected individuals, and PayPal is working with a
20 consumer credit reporting agency to provide free credit monitoring
21 memberships. Individuals who are affected will be contacted
22 directly and receive instructions to sign up for monitoring.

23 Defendants' Request for Judicial Notice, Ex. E.³ The following trading day, December 4, 2017,
24 PayPal's share price dropped \$4.33 (5.75%) and closed at \$70.97. SAC ¶ 40.

25 Plaintiffs contend the November Announcement failed to fully disclose the seriousness of
26 the security breach. *Id.* ¶ 30. Instead, Plaintiffs assert that Defendants were aware of an alleged
27 breach of TIO's security that exposed the personal information of TIO's customers, bill-pay
28 clients, and employees. *Id.* Plaintiffs argue this omission was materially misleading. They assert
the drop in price following the December Announcement, which disclosed the potential

³ The Court **DENIES** Defendants' RJN as to Exhibits A and B as moot because these exhibits are not relevant to resolving this motion. The Court **GRANTS** Defendants' RJN as to Exhibits C, D, and E as incorporated by reference because Plaintiffs referenced them throughout the SAC, and they form the basis for Plaintiffs' claims. Notice is taken of the fact that the announcements were released, but not for the truth of the statements therein.

1 compromise of 1.6 million users' data, caused the loss in stock value suffered by Plaintiffs.

2 In asserting their claims of securities fraud by Defendants, Plaintiffs rely primarily on three
3 confidential former employees' ("FE") statements. Below are the statements from the three FEs,
4 and how their statements in the SAC were amended from the FAC:

5 1. Former Employee 1

6 FE1 was a Support Operations Manager at TIO from February 2016
7 to March 2018, and reported to Senior Vice-President of Operations
8 at TIO. FE1 learned of the breach on November 10, 2017 when FE1
9 and colleagues received an email around 3 p.m. inviting them to a
10 special meeting. They learned that TIO would be shut down and
11 were told that someone had access to confidential information for
12 customers. *FE1 was informed at the special meeting that someone
13 had accessed the names and addresses for customers as well as
14 employees' information, including gender, social security, numbers,
15 and dates of birth. FE1 also recalled that they were informed at
16 that meeting that the intruder had accesses confidential customer
17 information, and that PayPal said someone had tools and had
18 accessed confidential information, which was sitting in the TIO
19 Networks' servers.*

14 SAC ¶ 31 (emphasis added to illustrate amendment).

15 2. Former Employee 2

16 FE2 was a contract Senior Systems Administrator at TIO Networks
17 in Vancouver from September 2017 to February 2018, reporting to
18 TIO IT Manager Mike McKenzie. FE2 stating that in early
19 November while waiting for an all-hands TIO meeting in their
20 conference room FE2 was summoned back to a different office to
21 hear an announcement from Kunze, telling that TIO had actually
22 been breached. FE2 states that PayPal discovered the breach during
23 a security analysis of the TIO network, and that when they were
24 doing so, they discovered someone in the system. *Immediately after
25 Kunze informed FE2 of the breach, the network team immediately
26 severed the link between the corporate and production side of the
27 network, the latter of which being where sensitive customer
28 information was stored, in an attempt to minimize harm to
customers. FE2 understood the decision to sever ties between the
two halves of the network to demonstrate a serious concern that
TIO's customer information was in jeopardy or already had been
compromised.*

25 SAC ¶ 33 (emphasis added to illustrate amendment).

26 3. Former Employee 3

27 FE3 was Senior .NET Developer for TIO from January 2010 until
28 April 1, 2018, who designed, implemented and maintained the
billing and payment systems for TIO. FE3 also performed

1 integrations between clients' application programming interfaces
 2 and TIO's server. *FE3 stated that employees* of TIO learned of a
 3 security *breach* in early November when TIO announced it had
 discovered a vulnerability. It was FE3's understanding that this was
 also the time the breach was discovered.

4 SAC ¶ 34 (emphasis added to illustrate amendment). Plaintiffs assert that the FE statements, as
 5 amended, demonstrate that Defendants knew at the time of the November Announcement that it
 6 was materially misleading.

7 **B. Procedural Background**

8 Plaintiffs filed this action on December 6, 2017. Docket No. 1. On March 15, 2018, the
 9 Court appointed Michael Eckert and Edwin Bell as interim co-lead plaintiffs. Docket No. 31.
 10 Plaintiffs filed their FAC on June 13, 2018. Docket No. 57. Thereafter, Defendants filed motions
 11 to dismiss the FAC. Docket Nos. 59, 61. The Court dismissed the FAC with leave to amend.
 12 Docket No. 75. Plaintiffs filed their SAC on January 14, 2019. Docket No. 76.

13 **II. LEGAL STANDARDS**

14 **A. Rule 12(b)(6)**

15 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) requires a complaint to include "a short and plain
 16 statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief." Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). A
 17 complaint that fails to meet this standard may be dismissed pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil
 18 Procedure 12(b)(6). *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6). To overcome a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss
 19 after the Supreme Court's decisions in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009), and *Bell Atlantic*
 20 *Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007), a plaintiff's "factual allegations [in the complaint] 'must .
 21 . . suggest that the claim has at least a plausible chance of success.'" *Levitt v. Yelp! Inc.*, 765 F.3d
 22 1123, 1135 (9th Cir. 2014). The court "accept[s] factual allegations in the complaint as true and
 23 construe[s] the pleadings in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party." *Manzarek v. St.*
 24 *Paul Fire & Marine Ins. Co.*, 519 F.3d 1025, 1031 (9th Cir. 2008). But "allegations in a
 25 complaint . . . may not simply recite the elements of a cause of action [and] must contain sufficient
 26 allegations of underlying facts to give fair notice and to enable the opposing party to defend itself
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1 effectively.” *Levitt*, 765 F.3d at 1135 (internal quotation marks omitted).⁴ “A claim has facial
 2 plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable
 3 inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678. “The
 4 plausibility standard is not akin to a probability requirement, but it asks for more than a sheer
 5 possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully.” *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted).

6 B. Rule 9(b) and the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act (“PLSRA”)

7 The PSLRA imposes additional pleading requirements. *Ronconi v. Larkin*, 253 F.3d 423,
 8 429 (9th Cir. 2001). “In alleging fraud or mistake, a party must state with particularity the
 9 circumstances constituting fraud or mistake.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 9(b). In order to “properly allege
 10 falsity, a securities fraud complaint must now ‘specify each statement alleged to have been
 11 misleading, the reason or reasons why the statement is misleading, and, if an allegation regarding
 12 the statement or omission is made on information and belief, . . . state with particularity all facts
 13 on which that belief is formed.’” *In re Rigel Pharm., Inc. Sec. Litig.*, 697 F.3d 869, 876–77 (9th
 14 Cir. 2012) (quoting 15 U.S.C. § 78u–4(b)(1)) (marks of omission in original).

15 Scienter must also be pled with greater particularity. For a private securities fraud
 16 complaint to survive a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss, pleadings must raise a “strong inference”
 17 that Defendants made misleading statements to investors knowingly or with deliberate
 18 recklessness. *Ronconi*, 253 F.3d at 429. In particular, a “plaintiff may recover money damages
 19 only on proof that the defendant acted with a particular state of mind, the complaint shall, with
 20 respect to each act or omission alleged to violate [section 10(b)], state with particularity facts
 21 giving rise to a strong inference that the defendant acted with the required state of mind.” 15
 22 U.S.C.A. § 78u-4. The term scienter for the purposes of section 10(b) “refers to a mental state
 23 embracing intent to deceive, manipulate, or defraud.” *Ernst & Ernst v. Hochfelder*, 425 U.S. 185,
 24 193 n.12 (1976). A plaintiff must show that “the defendants made false or misleading statements
 25 either intentionally or with deliberate recklessness.” *Zucco Partners, LLC v. Digimarc Corp.*, 552

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 28 ⁴ A court “need not . . . accept as true allegations that contradict matters properly subject to
 judicial notice or by exhibit.” *Sprewell v. Golden State Warriors*, 266 F.3d 979, 988 (9th Cir.
 2001).

1 F.3d 981, 991 (9th Cir. 2009), *as amended* (Feb. 10, 2009). Plaintiffs’ assertion of a strong
 2 inference of scienter “must be more than merely plausible or reasonable—it must be cogent and at
 3 least as compelling as any opposing inference of nonfraudulent intent.” *Tellabs, Inc. v. Makor*
 4 *Issues & Rights, Ltd.* 551 U.S. 308, 314 (2007). When evaluating scienter, a court must “engage
 5 in a comparative evaluation,” and must consider “not only inferences urged by the plaintiff,” but
 6 the court must also consider “competing inferences rationally drawn from the facts alleged.” *Id.*

7 “Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 makes it unlawful for ‘any person .
 8 . . [t]o use or employ, in connection with the purchase or sale of any security registered on a
 9 national securities exchange . . . any manipulative or deceptive device or contrivance in
 10 contravention of such rules and regulations as the Commission may prescribe as necessary or
 11 appropriate in the public interest or for the protection of investors.” *Zucco Partners, LLC*, 552
 12 F.3d at 990 (quoting 15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)) (internal quotation marks omitted) (alterations in
 13 original).

14 Rule 10b–5 states:

15 It shall be unlawful for any person, directly or indirectly, by the use
 16 of any means or instrumentality of interstate commerce, or of the
 17 mails or of any facility of any national securities exchange, (a) To
 18 employ any device, scheme, or artifice to defraud, (b) To make any
 19 untrue statement of a material fact or to omit to state a material fact
 20 necessary in order to make the statements made, in the light of the
 circumstances under which they were made, not misleading, or (c)
 To engage in any act, practice, or course of business which operates
 or would operate as a fraud or deceit upon any person, in connection
 with the purchase or sale of any security.

21 17 C.F.R. § 240.10b–5. “The SEC promulgated Rule 10b–5 pursuant to authority granted under §
 22 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, 15 U.S.C. § 78j(b). Although neither Rule 10b–5
 23 nor § 10(b) expressly creates a private right of action, [the Supreme] Court has held that ‘a private
 24 right of action is implied under § 10(b).’” *Janus Capital Grp., Inc. v. First Derivative Traders*,
 25 564 U.S. 135, 141–42 (2011) (quoting *Superintendent of Ins. of N.Y. v. Bankers Life & Casualty*
 26 *Co.*, 404 U.S. 6, 13, n. 9 (1971)).

27 To succeed on a claim under section 10(b) and Rule 10b–5, a plaintiff must show: “(1) a
 28 material misrepresentation or omission; (2) scienter; (3) a connection between the

1 misrepresentation or omission and the purchase or sale of a security; (4) reliance; (5) economic
 2 loss; and (6) loss causation.” *Oregon Pub. Employees Ret. Fund v. Apollo Grp. Inc.*, 774 F.3d
 3 598, 603 (9th Cir. 2014) (citing *Stoneridge Inv. Partners, LLC v. Scientific–Atlanta, Inc.*, 552 U.S.
 4 148, 157 (2008)). A complaint asserting claims under section 10(b) and Rule 10b–5 “must satisfy
 5 the dual pleading requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 9(b) and the PSLRA.” *Zucco*
 6 *Partners, LLC*, 552 F.3d at 990.

7 **III. DISCUSSION**

8 A. A Material Misrepresentation or Omission: Falsity

9 The Court previously found that Plaintiffs’ claims satisfied the pleading requirements for
 10 falsity. Docket No. 75 (the November Announcement “could plausibly have created an
 11 impression that only a potential vulnerability and not an actual breach had been discovered, and
 12 certainly not one which threatened the privacy of 1.6 million users.”). Defendants request the
 13 Court to reconsider its previous ruling, Mot. at 17, while claiming, alternatively, that they are not
 14 bound by the findings relating to an inoperative complaint. Reply at 3. Plaintiffs claim that the
 15 Court need not revisit the prior finding because the falsity argument remains unchanged from the
 16 FAC to the SAC. Opp. at 22. Defendants cite to *Askins v. U.S. Department of Homeland*
 17 *Security*, 899 F.3d 1035, 1043 (9th Cir. 2018), which holds that the “district court may decide the
 18 second motion to dismiss in the same way it decided the first, but permitting the filing of an
 19 amended complaint requires a new determination.”

20 As with the FAC, the alleged false, misleading statement arises from the November
 21 Announcement. SAC ¶¶ 39–41. Here, Defendants set forth the same arguments against falsity as
 22 they did in their prior motion to dismiss. *Compare* Mot. at 17–18, *with* Docket No. 61 at 7–10.
 23 Specifically, they claim that the November Announcement must be “necessarily inconsistent” with
 24 the subsequent December Announcement. Reply at 2.

25 To prove falsity for the purposes of Section 10(b) and Rule 10b–5, Plaintiffs must “specify
 26 each statement alleged to have been misleading, [and] the reason or reasons why the statement is
 27 misleading.” 15 U.S.C. § 78u–4(b)(1). As this Court concluded in its earlier ruling, a literally true
 28 statement “can be misleading and thus actionable under the securities laws.” *Brody v.*

1 *Transitional Hosps. Corp.*, 280 F.3d 997, 1006 (9th Cir. 2002) (citing *In re GlenFed Sec. Litig.*, 42
2 F.3d 1541, 1551 (9th Cir. 1994)). “To be actionable under the securities laws, an omission must
3 be misleading; in other words, it must affirmatively create an impression of a state of affairs that
4 differs in a material way from the one that actually exists.” *Id.* (citing *McCormick v. The Fund*
5 *American Cos.*, 26 F.3d 869, 880 (9th Cir. 1994)).

6 Plaintiffs’ contention was, and still is, that the November Announcement was false and
7 misleading “because they disclosed only a security vulnerability, rather than an actual security
8 breach *that potentially compromised all 16 million TIO customers*, which PayPal and TIO did not
9 acknowledge had been detected” SAC ¶ 42 (emphasis added). Specifically, Plaintiffs allege
10 “that an unknown but unauthorized person or entity was at that time logged in to TIO’s networks
11 and had access to the financial information of 1.6 million users.” *Id.* ¶ 4.⁵ Defendants continue to
12 argue that the November Announcement was consistent with the December Announcement—*i.e.*,
13 that the prior announcement disclosing the investigation of vulnerabilities was not inconsistent
14 with the subsequent announcement revealing an actual security breach. Mot. at 18.

15 As the Court found in its previous order, Defendants’ November Announcement purported
16 to disclose a “vulnerability” in TIO’s security, which triggered an investigation and review. This
17 disclosure could plausibly have created an impression that only a potential vulnerability and not an
18 actual breach had been discovered, and a vulnerability differs considerably from a breach that
19 actually threatens the privacy of 1.6 million users. *See Berson v. Applied Signal Tech., Inc.*, 527
20 F.3d 982, 987 (9th Cir. 2008) (finding that “[i]t goes without saying that investors would treat” a
21 risk and a certainty differently). Notwithstanding the December Announcement being
22 “corrective” and “not inconsistent,” the November Announcement could reasonably have created a
23 false impression that had the effect of misleading investors.

24 At the hearing, Defendants argued that plausibility is not sufficient for a finding of
25 falsity—*i.e.*, the heightened pleading standard applies to the false and misleading statement as well
26 as the scienter. *See Brody*, 280 F.3d 997 (“[i]n order to survive a motion to dismiss under the

27 _____
28 ⁵ Apparently there are 16 million bill pay accounts that TIO served, but 1.6 million is the number
of customers whose accounts were compromised.

1 heightened pleading standards of the [PLSRA], the plaintiffs' complaint must specify the reason or
2 reasons why the statements made by [the defendant] were misleading.”). But even so, the result is
3 the same because Plaintiffs have specifically pled, with detail, why the November Announcement
4 was misleading—*e.g.*, because current or potential investors understood the security vulnerability
5 to be minor. *See* SAC ¶¶ 39–41. Accordingly, Plaintiffs have again adequately pled a misleading
6 statement.

7 **B. Scienter and Loss Causation**

8 To survive a motion to dismiss, however, Plaintiffs must also demonstrate with
9 particularity that the speaker (here, Mr. Kunze) made the misleading statement with a guilty state
10 of mind. Here, scienter is premised on Plaintiffs’ argument that a holistic view of the SAC
11 supports their allegation that Defendants, particularly Mr. Kunze, knew of an actual data breach
12 and compromise of the privacy of millions of customers at the time of the November
13 Announcement; Plaintiffs’ loss-causation theory relies on the fact that when the public learned
14 about the actuality of the breach and its severity (affecting 1.6 million customers), the price of
15 PayPal’s stock dropped 5.75%.

16 To succeed under the loss-causation theory alleged in the SAC, Plaintiffs must satisfy the
17 heightened pleading requirements for scienter—specifically, that Defendants knew not only of a
18 vulnerability but an actual breach which compromised the privacy of 1.6 million customers. *In re*
19 *Gilead Scis. Sec. Litig.*, 536 F.3d 1049, 1055 (9th Cir. 2008) (quoting *In re Daou Sys., Inc.*, 411
20 F.3d 1006, 1014 (9th Cir.2005)) (recognizing that a plaintiff must “demonstrate a causal
21 connection between the deceptive acts that form the basis for the claim of securities fraud and the
22 injury suffered by the plaintiff”).

23 Plaintiffs continue to rely on three former employees of TIO to support a showing of
24 scienter. SAC ¶¶ 30–35. In addition to these employees, Plaintiffs now also rely on the
25 statements of a cybersecurity expert they engaged to “review[] PayPal’s and TIO’s public
26 statements on November 10 and December 1, confidential witness statements set forth in [the
27 SAC], and publicly available information concerning TIO’s breach.” SAC ¶ 36.

1 1. Former TIO employees

2 The Court previously dismissed the FAC when it found the FE statements failed to satisfy
3 the scienter requirement because they showed “at most [] that some of the Defendants may have
4 known that there was some breach in TIO’s platform. They do not substantiate allegations that
5 Defendants on November 10, 2017, ‘determined that an unknown but unauthorized person or
6 entity was at that time logged in to TIO’s networks *and had access to the personal financial*
7 *information of 1.6 million users.*” Docket No. 70 (emphasis in original).

8 As such, most of the SAC’s amendments are based on the amended FE statements.
9 Confidential witness statements can create a strong inference of scienter only if the reporting
10 witness has “reliable personal knowledge of the defendants’ mental state.” *Zucco Partners, LLC*
11 *v. Digimarc Corp.*, 552 F.3d 981, 998 (9th Cir. 2009), *as amended* (Feb. 10, 2009). The Ninth
12 Circuit has articulated a two-prong test for a plaintiff relying on confidential-witness statements to
13 prove scienter: (1) statements must be described with sufficient particularity to establish their
14 reliability and personal knowledge; and (2) the statements must themselves be indicative of
15 scienter. *Id.* at 994 (citing *In re Daou Sys., Inc.*, 411 F.3d 1006, 1015–16, 1022 (9th Cir. 2005)).
16 Therefore, for the FEs to support the necessary finding of scienter, the FEs’ statements must
17 demonstrate with reliable facts creating a “strong inference” that Mr. Kunze knew of or recklessly
18 disregarded the breach, the magnitude of which could have affected 1.6 million customers.

19 a. Former Employee 1

20 FE1 stated she learned of the breach on November 10, 2017, when she received an e-mail
21 around 3:00 p.m., inviting her to a special meeting where she and other employees “were told that
22 someone had access to confidential information for customers.” SAC ¶ 31. Plaintiffs further
23 allege that “FE1 *was informed* at the special meeting that someone had accessed the names and
24 addresses for customers as well as employees’ information, including gender, social security
25 numbers, and dates of birth. FE1 also recalled that *they were informed* at the meeting that the
26 intruder had accessed confidential customer information, and that *PayPal said* someone had tools
27 and had accessed confidential information, which was sitting in the TIO Networks’ servers.” *Id.*
28 (emphasis added). Accordingly, because of this, FE1 “understood the breach had potential to

1 impact all TIO customers and all TIO employees—everyone whose personal information was
2 stored on its servers.” *Id.* (emphasis removed).

3 Like FE1’s statements in the FAC, FE1’s recounting of the events in the SAC still fails to
4 show that **Mr. Kunze knew**, by the November Announcement, that someone had compromised the
5 data of 1.6 million TIO customers. No statement is attributed to Mr. Kunze or any of the other
6 individual defendants. Nor do the alleged statements made at the meeting show that the individual
7 defendants knew the breach had compromised the records of 1.6 million customers. FE1’s
8 statement is made more problematic by the fact that the amended statement is inconsistent with
9 FE1’s prior statement. Previously, FE1 is quoted as stating that “they suspected or saw” that
10 someone had access to customer data (FAC ¶ 32), which is materially different than “they were
11 informed” of the intrusion (SAC ¶ 31). There is a distinct difference in degree of certainty and, by
12 implication, the depth of the company’s knowledge regarding the breach. This discrepancy raises
13 credibility concerns about FE1. *See Zucco*, 552 F.3d at 995 (reliability and personal knowledge
14 must be satisfied in the first prong of the two-part test); *In re Maxwell Techs., Inc. Sec. Litig.*, 18
15 F. Supp. 3d 1023, 1034 (S.D. Cal. 2014) (a court must “examine the witnesses for indicia of
16 reliability and personal knowledge . . .”).

17 In sum, FE1’s statements fail for three reasons. First, that an unknown individual informed
18 FE1 at a special meeting of a breach of confidential information, and that “PayPal said someone
19 had tools and had accessed confidential information” fails to show specifically who at PayPal
20 informed FE1 of the breach or what the individual said. In particular, the SAC fails to connect the
21 dots as to who informed her of the breach at the specially-called meeting, or why the unknown
22 individual felt obliged to report the breach to FE1 in her role as a Support Operations Manager.
23 Second, nearly all the amendments to FE1’s summary relies on hearsay (*e.g.*, she was informed by
24 an unnamed person at PayPal and informed by an unnamed person at the meeting), which the
25 Court must weigh against reliability when considering scienter. *See Zucco*, 552 F.3d at 998, n. 4
26 (hearsay statements relied upon by confidential witnesses may not be sufficiently reliable,
27 plausible, or coherent to warrant further consideration of proving the scienter requirement).
28 Lastly, as discussed in above, FE1’s memory of the meeting in the FAC contradicts her account in

1 the SAC. *Compare* FAC ¶ 32 (“they suspected or saw that someone had access to customer data .
2 . . .” and that “[t]hey shut down service to complete the investigation.”); *with* SAC ¶ (“[we] were
3 informed at the special meeting that someone had accessed the names and addresses for customers
4 as well as employees’ information . . . and that PayPal said someone had tools and had accessed
5 confidential information . . .”).

6 Plaintiffs argue that this Court previously credited the FEs’ statements as reliable. This is
7 not so—the Court never opined on the reliability of the FE statements. The Court’s prior decision
8 assumed *arguendo* that the statements “at most establish that some of the Defendants may have
9 known that that there was some breach in TIO’s platform. They do not substantiate allegations
10 that Defendants on November 10, 2017, ‘determined that an unknown but unauthorized person or
11 entity was at the time logged into TIO’s networks and had access to personal information of 1.6
12 million users.’” Docket No. 75 at 11. FE1’s amended statement remain deficient.

13 In particular, the statement on its face do not show—let alone mention—that Mr. Kunze
14 had knowledge of a breach affecting 1.6 million customers and used that knowledge (or recklessly
15 disregarded it) to deceive the market. Yet, Plaintiffs must allege Mr. Kunze’s scienter because he
16 is the only alleged speaker relative to the November Agreement. *See* Declaration of Ludwig,
17 Exhibit A, at 15:21–22 (“That’s right, Your Honor. And let’s be specific. Scienter has to be to
18 Mr. Kunze, who’s the only alleged speaker.”). FE1’s statements are not sufficiently indicative of
19 scienter.⁶

20
21 ⁶ Plaintiffs cite *S. Ferry LP #2 v. Killinger*, 687 F. Supp. 2d 1248, 1254 (W.D. Wash. 2009) for the
22 proposition that a complaint may rely on either direct or circumstantial evidence to plead scienter
23 adequately. However, an expanded reading of the passage to which Plaintiffs cite reads “but even
24 the PLSRA’s heightened pleading requirements. *Id.* (citing *In re Silicon Graphics Inc. Sec. Litig.*,
25 183 F.3d 970, 974 (9th Cir. 1999), *as amended* (Aug. 4, 1999). Plaintiffs next two cases are case-
26 specific applications of circumstantial evidence. *See In re UTStarcom, Inc. Sec. Litig.*, 617 F.
27 Supp. 2d 964, 975 (N.D. Cal. 2009) (\$400 million in restated revenues can support an inference of
28 scienter because revenues must be earned before it can be recognized.); *In re Alstom SA*, 406 F.
Supp. 2d 433, 504 (S.D.N.Y. 2005) (trial court finds pleadings sufficiently show a strong
inference that the cost overruns were *widely* known). Here, Plaintiffs do not analogize the alleged
security breach with restated revenues, nor does the SAC allege with specificity that the breach
was “widely known,” especially given that it was a “special meeting” where FE1 learned of this
information. Confidential statements can only create a strong inference of scienter when the
reporting witness has reliable personal knowledge of the defendants’ mental state. *See Zucco*,
552, F.3d at 998.

1 b. Former Employee 2 and 3

2 FE2's amended statement reiterates the earlier assertion that Mr. Kunze announced, in a
3 closed meeting, that TIO had actually been breached. SAC ¶ 33. Like the FAC, at most, this
4 statement, if believed, may show that there was *some* breach in the TIO platform known to Mr.
5 Kunze. The new statement, however, goes on to state that "immediately after Kunze informed
6 FE2 of the breach, the network team immediately severed the link between the corporate and
7 production side of the network, the latter of which being where sensitive customer information
8 was stored, in an attempt to minimize harm to customers." *Id.* FE2's new statement does not
9 take the extra step of specifically pleading, as the PSLRA and Rule 9(b) require, that Mr. Kunze
10 had knowledge of the magnitude of the breach. Instead, Plaintiffs seek to infer that the subsequent
11 severing of the network is somehow an admission that Mr. Kunze had knowledge of the depth of
12 the breach (reaching 1.6 million customers); but this inference is less cogent and compelling than
13 the inference that the severing of the network was for preventative measures pending further
14 investigation. In essence, FE2's statement remains substantively unchanged between the FAC and
15 SAC. Similarly, FE3's statement remains substantively unchanged between the FAC and SAC.
16 Like FE1's statement, FE3's statement does not even mention Mr. Kunze, and simply claims that
17 it was *her* understanding (rather than Mr. Kunze having knowledge) that there was a breach in
18 November 2017.

19 The Ninth Circuit requires that confidential witnesses meet the two-prong test of
20 reliability. *See Daou*, 411 F.3d at 1014; *Zucco*, 552 F.3d at 991 (first, the statements must be
21 described with sufficient particularity to establish their reliability and personal knowledge; and
22 second, the statements must themselves be indicative of scienter). None of the FEs' statements,
23 either individually or collectively, meet that test of reliability in demonstrating that Mr. Kunze
24 knew on November 10, 2017, of the magnitude of the breach when he made the November
25 Announcement.

26 The weakness of any inference of scienter is underscored by the lack of any obvious
27 incentive to mislead. There is no allegation of motivation – *e.g.*, that Defendants sold stock during
28 the Class Period or that any of the individual defendants stood to gain a profit from the alleged

1 wrongdoing. Nor is there any satisfying explanation of what benefit Defendants hoped to gain by
 2 delay disclosure of the full scope of the breach by three weeks. This was not like overestimating
 3 financial performance of a company with the hope and possibility that financial fortunes might
 4 improve and thereby mask an otherwise misleading statement. If there were a breach causing 1.6
 5 million customer files to be compromised, that fact could not be undone, mooted, or masked by
 6 waiting three weeks.⁷

7 2. Cybersecurity Expert (Mr. Kenny Yeung)

8 To bolster their showing of scienter, Plaintiffs “engaged the services of a cybersecurity
 9 expert in determining what information was likely available to TIO regarding the scope of
 10 potential compromise of TIO customers’ data at the time the breach was discovered on November
 11 10.” SAC ¶ 36. Defendants take issue with the use of Mr. Yeung’s conclusions because he has no
 12 personal knowledge about what occurred at TIO. Mot. at 12.

13 Both parties agree that there is authority for the proposition that a plaintiff can support a
 14 securities fraud claim with opinions provided by an expert. In *Nursing Home Pension Fund,*
 15 *Local 144 v. Oracle Corporation*, a case alleging false reporting of revenue and
 16 misrepresentations regarding sales projections by defendant Oracle, the Ninth Circuit found that
 17 documents relating to the billing and payment histories of Oracle’s customers, obtained by
 18 plaintiffs and analyzed by their financial expert, appeared to establish improper revenue
 19 adjustment. *Nursing Home Pension Fund, Local 144 v. Oracle Corp.*, 380 F.3d 1226, 1232–34
 20 (9th Cir. 2004). The Ninth Circuit credited the use of plaintiff’s expert—a former financial
 21 analyst—who (1) had reviewed the billing and payment histories of some of Oracle’s customers;
 22 (2) had actually spoken with Oracle employees regarding customer payments; and (3) had
 23 provided specific and detailed reporting of the statements of the Oracle employees. *Id.* at 1233.
 24 *Nursing Home* concluded that the complaint had described the witnesses (including plaintiff’s

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 26
 27 ⁷ In their opposition and at the hearing, counsel for Plaintiffs argued a “soft landing” theory—*i.e.*,
 28 that Defendants intentionally disclosed only some of the bad news before making the full
 disclosure so as to soften the negative reaction from the public. Opp. at 16. This theory is not
 pled in the SAC, is not supported by the FE statements, and appears to be based on speculation
 only.

1 expert) “with sufficient particularity to establish that they were in a position to know Oracle's
2 accounting practices.” *Nursing Home*, 380 F.3d at 1233 (citing *Novak v. Kasak*, 216 F.3d 300,
3 314 (2d Cir. 2000)). The court added, however, that what was even more important was that the
4 documents in which plaintiff’s expert relied “*themselves* appear to establish improper revenue
5 adjustment.” *Id.* (emphasis added).

6 Thus, based on *Nursing Home* and *Zucco*, district courts can consider allegations from
7 experts if such factual allegations satisfy the same standard applied to confidential informants.
8 *See Browning v. Amyris, Inc.*, 2014 WL 1285175, at *19 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 24, 2014) (experts are
9 evaluated just as confidential informants). Therefore, Mr. Yeung must meet the two-prong test of
10 *Zucco* such that (1) his statements must be described with sufficient particularity to establish his
11 reliability and personal knowledge; and (2) his statements must themselves be indicative of
12 scientist.

13 According to the SAC, Mr. Yeung has twenty-three years of experience in information
14 technology (security, audit, risk assessment, and risk management) and IT operations. SAC ¶ 36.
15 He reviewed three categories of information to reach his conclusion: (1) PayPal’s and TIO’s
16 public statements on November 10 and December 1; (2) confidential statements set forth in the
17 SAC, and (3) publicly available information concerning TIO’s breach.” *Id.* Mr. Yeung concluded
18 that “PayPal and TIO’s conduct in response to the breach indicates that they were likely aware that
19 **all** customer data had been potentially compromised as of November 10th.” *Id.* ¶ 37 (emphasis in
20 original). He reached this conclusion because, to him, TIO’s customer’s personal and financial
21 data are its most valuable information and are what criminals who breach such servers would
22 immediately attempt to steal. *Id.*

23 However, Mr. Yeung’s expert opinion fails to sufficiently strengthen the inference of
24 scientist. There is also no allegation that Mr. Yeung was familiar with, much less had knowledge
25 of, the specific security architecture of Defendants’ privacy network. In fact, the SAC coins Mr.
26 Yeung’s conclusion as “the most reasonable assumption,” which appears to be merely a guess
27 about the structure of Defendants’ network. Unlike the expert in *Nursing Home*, Mr. Yeung did
28 not actually talk to employees at TIO or PayPal, nor did he review documents that—in and of

1 themselves—demonstrate inconsistencies that were available to Mr. Kunze during the November
2 Announcement. *See Nursing Home*, 380 F.3d at 1230 (“[t]he most direct way to show both that a
3 statement was false when made and that the party making the statement knew that it was false is
4 via contemporaneous reports or data, available to the party, which contradict the statement.”).

5 The situation here is similar to a recent decision in this district wherein plaintiffs’ theory of
6 securities fraud relied on the opinion of a non-testifying expert. In *In re OmniVision Techs., Inc.*
7 *Sec. Litig.*, 937 F. Supp. 2d 1090, 1108 (N.D. Cal. 2013, plaintiffs sued defendant for purportedly
8 concealing the fact that it (a designer and supplier of semiconductors) lost a contract with Apple to
9 Sony before the production of a new iPhone. *Id.* at 1094. Apple was the defendant’s largest
10 customer. *Id.* Plaintiffs hired a non-testifying expert consultant to opine as to when Apple’s
11 procurement process would have begun and when Apple would have started looking for
12 alternative suppliers. *Id.* at 1095. Specifically, this expert was used to establish that because this
13 iPhone had an extended product development cycle, Apple would have decided to use Sony
14 components (and not the defendant’s components) on a date prior to the start of the class period.
15 *Id.* at 1107. The *OmniVision* court found that the complaint’s reliance on this expert was
16 “essentially an allegation made on information and belief without disclosing the actual basis” for
17 its findings—*i.e.*, no personal knowledge.

18 Plaintiffs attempt to distinguish *OmniVision* by arguing that, there, the expert witness’s
19 opinions were inadequate because “they were phrased in terms of what Apple ‘would have done’ .
20 . . not facts about what Apple actually did.” *Opp.* at 15. But that is essentially what Mr. Yeung
21 has done here—*i.e.*, he is inferring what likely would have happened in the event of any breach.

22 Even considered holistically with the SAC, Mr. Yeung’s conclusions do not support a
23 finding of scienter. *See Nursing Home*, 380 F.3d at 1234 (“Considered separately, Plaintiffs’
24 allegations may not create a strong inference of scienter. However, we must consider “whether
25 the total of plaintiffs’ allegations, even though individually lacking, are sufficient to create a strong
26 inference that defendants acted with deliberate or conscious recklessness.”) (citing *No. 84*
27 *Employer-Teamster Joint Council Pension Tr. Fund v. Am. W. Holding Corp.*, 320 F.3d 920, 938
28 (9th Cir. 2003)).

United States District Court
Northern District of California

1 Accordingly, Defendants’ motion to dismiss is **GRANTED with prejudice**. *See Salameh*
2 *v. Tarsadia Hotel*, 726 F.3d 1124, 1133 (9th Cir. 2013) (“A district court’s discretion to deny leave
3 to amend is ‘particularly broad’ where the plaintiff has previously amended.”).

4 C. Control Liability 20(a)

5 For a Section 20(a) claim, Plaintiffs “must show that a primary violation was committed
6 and that the defendant ‘directly or indirectly’ controlled the violator.” *Paracor Fin., Inc. v. Gen.*
7 *Elec. Capital Corp.*, 96 F.3d 1151, 1161 (9th Cir. 1996). “Section 20(a) claims may be dismissed
8 summarily . . . if a plaintiff fails to adequately plead a primary violation of section 10(b).” *Zucco*
9 *Partners, LLC*, 552 F.3d at 990. Plaintiffs’ Section 20(a) claim relies on the viability of a Section
10 10(b) claim. As such, Defendants’ motion to dismiss Plaintiffs’ Section 20(a) claim is
11 **GRANTED with prejudice**.

12 In sum, the SAC is dismissed with prejudice. This order disposes of Docket No. 79.

13 The Clerk is instructed to enter Judgment and close the file.

14
15 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

16
17 Dated: September 18, 2019

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19 
20 EDWARD M. CHEN
21 United States District Judge