Facebook Backs Down On Plan To Track Teens

from The Privacy Times

Responding to criticism and possible action by regulators, Facebook has amended its privacy policies by removing a proposed controversial line about its teen users.

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In August, Facebook proposed new language that assumed all minors on the site had discussed with their parents or guardians the terms of use on the site and its implications. The line was part of a larger group of changes that included showing a Facebook userâ€™s public profile picture, comments and â€œlikesâ€• alongside advertisements to the userâ€™s frie

On Nov. 15th, the amended privacy policies took effect without the controversial line.

â€œWe asked the commission to investigate,â€• Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy told the Associated Press. â€œObviously, they were feeling the pressure.â€•

An FTC spokesman told the AP that the commission wouldnâ€™t comment specifically on the case. â€œHowever the FTC rigorously monitors compliance with all of its orders, and that includes reviewing any material changes to the privacy policy of a company that is under a privacy order from the FTC.â€• Last year, Facebook entered into an agreement that allows the FTC to monitor its privacy policies.

â€œThis language was about getting a conversation started,â€• Facebook wrote in a blog post. â€œWe were not seeking and w not have gained any additional rights as a result of this addition. We received feedback that the language was confusing and so we removed the sentence.â€•

Privacy advocates had taken issue with the proposed sentence because they feared Facebook would use it to expand its marketing practices with regard to teens. Privacy advocates filed a formal complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.

Changes to Facebookâ€™s privacy policy and data use often draw intense scrutiny, particularly when teenagers are involved. Last month, the social network began allowing minors to make their Facebook posts public, so that anyone could see them. Critics have also questioned the ability of packaged food companies to market to teens on Facebook, citing obesity concerns.

A Facebook spokeswoman said the company was confident its changes to its privacy policy comply with the FTC. â€•We have ongoing conversations with the FTC about order compliance and changes weâ€™re making to our service that affect peopleâ€™s privacy,â€• she said.
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