



**Federal Trade Commission
Privacy Impact Assessment**

Facebook

Updated September 2017

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC or Commission) has prepared this Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to analyze and explain how the FTC handles personally identifiable information (PII)¹ about individuals that may be available to the agency through the FTC's use of the social networking Web site, Facebook (www.facebook.com). The purpose of this PIA is: (i) to ensure that the FTC's handling of available PII conforms to applicable legal, regulatory, and policy requirements regarding privacy, (ii) to determine the risks and effects if the FTC were to collect, maintain or disseminate such information, and (iii) to examine and evaluate protections and alternative processes for handling such information to mitigate potential privacy risks. *See* section 208 of the E-Government Act of 2002 (E-GOV); Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Memoranda 03-22 (2003) & 10-23 (2010); OMB Circular A-130 (2017).

As explained below, the impact of the FTC's Facebook usage on individual privacy is low. The FTC uses Facebook as an additional avenue for providing consumers with information about the agency's activities and programs, but the FTC does not routinely use Facebook to solicit, collect, maintain, or disseminate PII from any individual. At the same time, however, the FTC suggests that individuals who visit or interact with the FTC's Facebook pages carefully review Facebook's terms of service and its privacy policies to understand how Facebook may collect or use their personal information, even if the FTC does not.

SECTION 1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 – What is the specific purpose of the FTC's use of Facebook, and how does that use fit with the agency's broader mission?

The FTC uses Facebook, a social networking website, to disseminate information to the public. The FTC currently maintains two specific Facebook pages: a general FTC page created and administered by the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) and a page created and administered by the Division of Consumer and Business Education (DCBE) catering to the military community.

The FTC Facebook pages can be accessed online at:

www.facebook.com/federaltradedecommission
www.facebook.com/militaryconsumer

These Facebook pages allow the Commission to promote FTC news and resources to consumers who may not be regular visitors to FTC websites, including www.ftc.gov and www.consumer.ftc.gov. Information posted to the FTC's Facebook pages is previously approved by FTC staff and includes, but is not limited to, press releases, consumer alerts, videos, blog post links, quizzes, and games.

These pages are available to the public, and individuals need not have a registered account on Facebook to see the FTC's Facebook page content. The vast majority of the FTC's content on Facebook is also available on existing FTC websites. However, users who wish to actively engage with the FTC on Facebook must be registered users of the site, per Facebook's [Terms of Service](#). Users who interact with the FTC on Facebook may like, comment on, and share the FTC's news and information, and those interactions add a viral marketing component to the Commission's outreach and education efforts.

¹ Per OMB Circular A-130, personally identifiable information (PII) means information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual.

The FTC also intends to use Facebook’s “Live” feature, which allows the agency to share live videos with consumers, media, partners, etc. Use of Facebook Live allows the FTC to provide answers to audience questions or comments in real time and demonstrates the Commission’s commitment to transparency and accessibility.

This PIA addresses the FTC’s use of Facebook to disseminate information to and interact with consumers about the Commission’s mission-related initiatives. It does not encompass the FTC’s use of Facebook for law enforcement investigations or any collection of personal information subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, and described more fully in the FTC’s [Statement of Record Notice I-1 \(Nonpublic Investigational and Other Nonpublic Legal Program Records\)](#).²

1.2 – Is the FTC’s use of Facebook consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies?

Yes. With respect to the information that the FTC will disseminate through its Facebook pages, the FTC Act authorizes the FTC to prevent unfair and deceptive acts and practices in interstate commerce and, in furtherance of this mission, to gather, compile, and make information available in the public interest. See 15 U.S.C. 45, 46(a), (f).

The President’s January 21, 2009 memorandum on *Transparency and Open Government* and the OMB Director’s December 8, 2009 *Open Government Directive* call on federal departments and agencies to harness new technologies to engage with the public. At the time of this writing, Facebook is estimated to have about two billion registered users. Using tools to communicate with consumers on platforms where they are active helps the FTC to meet the federal guidance outlined in the directive and memorandum including transparency, participation and collaboration.

The FTC’s use of Facebook also complies with other applicable Federal privacy and information security laws, including the Privacy Act of 1974, section 208 of the E-Government Act (E-GOV), the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), and implementing policy guidance. For example, per federal guidance issued under E-GOV, the FTC includes exit scripts/and other notices to consumers when linking from FTC websites to Facebook, where the FTC’s privacy policy does not apply. An example of an FTC exit script for Facebook is available [here](#). Furthermore, the FTC posts a detailed [privacy policy](#) on its Facebook page. More information about [Facebook’s privacy policy](#) is available online.

When the FTC’s account administrators share content on Facebook, including status updates and responses to comments, they strive to direct users to relevant FTC website pages as much as possible. The FTC’s official websites (<http://www.ftc.gov>) remain the official and primary source of information available to the public about the Commission, not its Facebook pages, as explained in notices posted on the FTC’s Facebook pages.

² See OMB 10-23 at 2 (requiring PIAs for “any Federal agency use of third-party websites or applications to engage with the public for the purpose of implementing the principles of the Open Government Directive.”) OMB 10-23 specifically carves out applicability for “activities that are part of authorized law enforcement, national security, or intelligence activities.”

SECTION 2.0 – AVAILABILITY OF PII

2.1 – What PII is made available to the FTC?

Individual users who register with Facebook are required to provide a first name, last name, valid email address, password, sex, and date of birth to create a personal Facebook profile. Once registered, users have the option to provide a wealth of additional information about themselves such as telephone number, interests, employment, etc., which may be displayed on the individual user's personal Facebook profile page or otherwise maintained or used by Facebook.

This information may be available to the FTC in whole or part, based on a user's privacy settings. The FTC does not routinely solicit, collect, or maintain any personally identifiable information from individuals who visit, like, comment, or otherwise engage with the FTC's Facebook pages. The FTC may, however, read, review, or rely upon information that individuals make available to the FTC on Facebook including comments on the FTC page, as authorized or required by law.

FTC Facebook administrators may delete any comments on the Commission's Facebook pages that contain unnecessary amounts of PII, as stated in the FTC's [comment policy](#) posted on its Facebook page.

The FTC may use generic user data available to page administrators through Facebook analytics, called Insights. This includes, but is not limited to, information about the number of likes and dislikes on the page in a given time period. None of the information that the FTC gleans from Insights includes any PII.

2.2 – What are the sources of the PII?

Individual Facebook users are the source of any PII available to the agency on Facebook. Consumers who simply visit the FTC's Facebook pages and either 1) do not have a Facebook account or 2) are not logged in/do not interact with the page, do not make any PII available to FTC Facebook administrators. Users who are logged in and interact with the FTC's pages by liking, sharing, or commenting on FTC pages/posts, at a minimum, make their names available to the FTC. Registered users of Facebook provide additional information as outlined in Section 2.1, which the FTC may or may not be able to see, depending on a user's privacy settings, which the user controls. The FTC does not collect, maintain, or disseminate that information.

When answering questions, hosting interactive Facebook chats, or live events broadcasted on Facebook Live, the FTC may collect comments, but makes every reasonable attempt to remove any names prior to preserving agency records.

Any data the FTC uses from Insights does not contain PII.

2.3 – Do the FTC's activities trigger the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) and, if so, how will the agency comply with the statute?

Per the OMB memorandum, *Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act* (April 7, 2010), the FTC's use of Facebook as outlined in Section 1.1 is not a web-based interactive technology that would trigger the PRA, since the FTC's use of Facebook is not an information collection activity under that law.

SECTION 3.0 -- THE FTC'S INTENDED OR EXPECTED USE OF PII

3.1 – Generally, how will the agency use the PII described in Section 2.0?

As explained earlier, the FTC may read, review, or rely upon information made available by individuals on Facebook (e.g., in any comments they post on the FTC's Facebook pages). The FTC, however, does not routinely collect or maintain PII that may be made available on Facebook about registered users, particularly those who visit and/or engage with the FTC's Facebook page including liking, commenting, and/or sharing FTC content. The FTC may use some analytical data from Facebook, as described in Section 3.2, but this information does not contain PII.

3.2 – Provide specific examples of the types of uses to which the PII may be subject.

The FTC may read, review, or rely upon information provided by individuals in comments on Facebook. See Section 3.1. When answering questions from consumers, hosting interactive Facebook chats, or live events broadcasted via Facebook Live, the FTC may also collect and maintain copies of these comments to satisfy Federal record retention requirements, but makes every reasonable attempt to remove any names prior to preserving such records.

As already noted, the Commission uses Facebook Insights to measure the overall number of likes and dislikes, and other engagement activities with FTC Facebook pages. Any data the FTC uses from Insights does not contain PII.

SECTION 4.0 -- SHARING OR DISCLOSING OF PII

4.1 – With what entities or persons inside or outside the agency will the PII be shared, and for what purposes will the PII be disclosed?

The FTC does not collect, maintain, or disseminate personal information from individuals who visit the FTC's Facebook page. The FTC itself does not routinely share or disseminate PII made available to it on Facebook with entities or persons outside the FTC. Rather, any PII on Facebook is collected from individuals and shared or otherwise disseminated solely by Facebook, and registered users may adjust their Facebook privacy settings to moderate the collection, sharing, or dissemination of their information by that site. See Section 2.0.

Generally, all the information available to the FTC from users who interact with the FTC on Facebook by liking, commenting on, or sharing FTC news and information is also made publicly available on Facebook to anyone visiting the FTC's pages. As noted earlier, the FTC can exercise limited control over the sharing of PII on its Facebook pages by deleting individual comments, consistent with its commenting policy, if an individual posts unnecessary amounts of PII.

It is important to note that the FTC's Facebook page is not the official FTC website. Facebook is controlled and operated by a third party and is not a government website or application. Therefore, by using Facebook and its application providers to access the FTC's Facebook page, users may be providing non-government third parties access to their personal information, which can be used to

distinguish or trace an individual's identity. Additionally, Facebook and its application providers may use persistent technology throughout their sites.

There is a possibility that other third party applications may access and share user information. For example, links posted by the FTC may lead to third-party, non-government websites that may have different privacy policies than those of Facebook or the FTC. When visiting the FTC Facebook page, users should be aware of their privacy settings and the personal information being collected by Facebook and non-FTC related applications.

4.2 – What safeguards are in place to prevent expansion of use beyond those authorized under law and described in this PIA?

Only approved staff members from OPA and DCBE have access to manage the FTC's Facebook pages. Each staff member with access must sign and comply with the Commission's internal Rules of Behavior for account management, prior to beginning account administration.

The FTC's Facebook pages are registered as official business accounts to manage FTC Facebook pages, and administrators do not use their personal FTC accounts to manage them.

SECTION 5.0 -- MAINTENANCE AND RETENTION OF PII

5.1 – How will the FTC maintain the PII, and for how long?

As explained earlier, the FTC does not routinely collect or maintain PII made available to it on Facebook.

As part of the Commission's staff reports, any information collected from Facebook Insights is kept in accordance with Federal record retention requirements, but this information normally does not contain any PII nor is it kept in any type of a searchable database.

Any comments collected as official agency records are retained and disposed of in accordance with applicable schedules issued or approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

Individual users register for Facebook accounts and maintain their data on Facebook to the extent permitted by Facebook's [terms of service](#). For example, users who choose to interact with the FTC can publicly "unlike" and delete their interactions on the FTC's pages at any time.

FTC Facebook page administrators have limited ability to delete users and/or their comments, hide posts, and block users, as noted earlier. Staff deletes comments that violate the FTC's comment policy, which is outlined on each of its Facebook pages. The FTC does not maintain any record of deleted comments nor do they notify users that their comments have violated the comment policy.

5.2 – Was the retention period established to minimize privacy risk?

Per the FTC's own [privacy policy](#), the FTC does not collect any information (including PII) that is unnecessary, in order to minimize privacy risk and reduce the amount of information that must be

maintained. In cases where the FTC determines that a copy of a comment or other interaction on Facebook must be made to satisfy Federal records retention requirements, the FTC makes every reasonable attempt to remove any identifiable portions (e.g., name of the user or other information that could identify the user) when retaining such a copy.

SECTION 6.0 – HOW THE AGENCY WILL SECURE PII

6.1 – Will the FTC’s privacy and security officials coordinate to develop methods of securing PII?

Not applicable. See Sections 2.0 and 5.0. Facebook, not the FTC, controls the security of comments or other information posted on that site. Facebook users should review Facebook’s terms of service and privacy policies for information regarding the security of that site. Any FTC copies of comments or other user interactions on Facebook with the FTC are maintained by the FTC subject to applicable Federal privacy and information security laws, and such copies would not normally include any PII, as explained earlier.

SECTION 7.0 – IDENTIFICATION AND MITIGATION OF OTHER PRIVACY RISKS

7.1 – What other privacy risks exist, and how will the agency mitigate those risks?

Facebook is a third-party service that uses persistent tracking technologies. In an effort to help consumers understand how their information is used by Facebook, the FTC posts additional notices to users on its Facebook pages, including a Facebook-specific [privacy policy](#). Furthermore, the FTC informs consumers who link to FTC Facebook pages from official FTC websites that they are leaving the FTC’s websites and the Commission’s privacy policy no longer governs, and provides links to Facebook’s privacy policy. These notices are available through exit scripts or text overlays at all points that connect users to Facebook from official FTC websites.

Per the terms of service negotiated by the General Services Administration (GSA) and Facebook, the FTC’s Facebook pages do not contain any third-party advertising. This limits any association with, or obscure links to, additional content that the FTC has neither reviewed nor endorsed on the FTC’s Facebook pages. In addition, Facebook users should review the site’s terms of service and privacy policies to understand how Facebook may collect information about such users, including what pages the user may visit, and how Facebook may use or share such information for third-party advertising or other purposes.

Users should also exercise care and be aware of the risks associated with any third-party Web site, particularly as to any tracking technology (e.g., cookies, beacons) and potentially interactive content (e.g., links, videos, games, applications, messaging, or other features or functions) that may collect, use, or share the user’s personal information, or compromise the user’s computer security, without the user’s knowledge or consent (e.g., malware, spyware, phishing). Because the vast majority of the FTC’s content on Facebook is already available on the FTC’s official websites, consumers do not need to visit or utilize the FTC’s Facebook pages if they have any privacy concerns about any third-party material (e.g., a comment or link) posted on such pages. Likewise, the FTC’s Facebook account administrators shall attempt to identify and remove such privacy and security threats and vulnerabilities as they may arise, if any, in managing the FTC’s pages.

The FTC routinely reviews Facebook privacy policies for any changes that may affect the FTC's use of Facebook and will update its privacy policies on Facebook, FTC.gov websites, and this PIA.

SECTION 8.0 – CREATION OR MODIFICATION OF A SYSTEM OF RECORDS

8.1 – Will the FTC's activities create or modify a "system of records" under the Privacy Act of 1974?

The FTC does not collect PII through its Facebook pages, thus it does not create or modify a system of records under the Privacy Act of 1974.

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