

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS: Edith Ramirez, Chairwoman
Julie Brill
Maureen K. Ohlhausen
Terrell McSweeney

In the Matter of)
)
Golf Connect, LLC,) DOCKET NO. C-4540
a limited liability company.)
)
_____)

COMPLAINT

The Federal Trade Commission, having reason to believe that Golf Connect, LLC, a limited liability company, has violated the Federal Trade Commission Act (“FTC Act”), and it appearing to the Commission that this proceeding is in the public interest, alleges:

1. Respondent Golf Connect, LLC is a Delaware limited liability company with its principal office or place of business at 6200 E. Thomas Road, Suite 308, Scottsdale, Arizona 85251. In April 2014, respondent acquired the assets and intellectual property of GolfSwitch, Inc., a Nevada corporation with its principal office or place of business at 6200 E. Thomas Road, Suite 308, Scottsdale, Arizona 85251. Respondent acquired, *inter alia*, the website www.golfhub.com and has operated that website since April 2014.
2. Respondent provides a communication platform and software and technology services to the golf industry.
3. The acts and practices of respondent as alleged in this complaint have been in or affecting commerce, as “commerce” is defined in Section 4 of the FTC Act.
4. Respondent has set forth on the website, <http://www.golfhub.com/CustomService/PrivacyPolicy?lang=en>, privacy policies and statements about its practices, including statements related to its participation in the Safe Harbor privacy frameworks agreed upon by the U.S. and the European Union (“U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework”) and the U.S. and Switzerland (“U.S.-Swiss Safe Harbor Framework”).

The Frameworks

5. The U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework provides a method for U.S. companies to transfer personal data outside of Europe that is consistent with the requirements of the European Union Directive on Data Protection (“Directive”). Enacted in 1995, the Directive sets forth European Union (“EU”) requirements for privacy and the protection of personal data.

Among other things, it requires EU Member States to implement legislation that prohibits the transfer of personal data outside the EU, with exceptions, unless the European Commission (“EC”) has made a determination that the recipient jurisdiction’s laws ensure the protection of such personal data. This determination is referred to commonly as meeting the EU’s “adequacy” standard.

6. To satisfy the EU adequacy standard for certain commercial transfers, the U.S. Department of Commerce (“Commerce”) and the EC negotiated the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework, which went into effect in 2000. The U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework allows U.S. companies to transfer personal data lawfully from the EU. To join the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework, a company must self-certify to Commerce that it complies with seven principles and related requirements that have been deemed to meet the EU’s adequacy standard.
7. Companies under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”), as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation, are eligible to join the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework. A company under the FTC’s jurisdiction that claims it has self-certified to the Safe Harbor principles, but failed to self-certify to Commerce, may be subject to an enforcement action based on the FTC’s deception authority under Section 5 of the FTC Act.
8. The U.S.-Swiss Safe Harbor Framework is identical to the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework and is consistent with the requirements of the Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection.
9. Commerce maintains a public website, www.export.gov/safeharbor, where it posts the names of companies that have self-certified to the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework and the U.S.-Swiss Safe Harbor Framework (“Safe Harbor Frameworks”). The listing of companies indicates whether their self-certification is “current” or “not current” and a date when recertification is due. Companies are required to re-certify every year in order to retain their status as “current” members of the Safe Harbor Frameworks.

Violations of Section 5 of the FTC Act

10. In May 2010, GolfSwitch, Inc. submitted to Commerce a self-certification of compliance with the Safe Harbor Frameworks.
11. In May 2013, GolfSwitch, Inc. did not renew its self-certification to the Safe Harbor Frameworks, and Commerce subsequently updated respondent’s status to “not current” on its public website.
12. In April 2014, Golf Connect, LLC acquired the assets and intellectual property of GolfSwitch, Inc., including the website www.golfhub.com.

13. Since at least April 2014, Golf Connect, LLC has disseminated or caused to be disseminated privacy policies and statements on the <http://www.golfhub.com/CustomerService/PrivacyPolicy?lang=en> website, including, but not limited to, the following statements:

This Privacy Statement covers the website <http://www.golfhub.com>, which is operated by GolfSwitch, Inc. (“we” or “us”). Your data will be maintained by GolfSwitch in accordance with this Privacy Statement...

The company complies with U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework and the U.S.-Swiss Safe Harbor Framework as set forth by the U.S. Department of Commerce regarding the collection, use, and retention of personal information from European Union member countries and Switzerland. The company has certified that it adheres to the Safe Harbor Privacy Principles of notice, choice, onward transfer, security, data integrity, access, and enforcement. To learn more about the Safe Harbor program, and to view the company’s certification, please visit <http://www.export.gov/safeharbor/>

14. Through the means described in Paragraph 13, respondent represents, expressly or by implication, that it is a “current” participant in the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor and U.S.-Swiss Safe Harbor Frameworks.
15. In truth and in fact, from April 2014 through April 2015, respondent was not a “current” participant in the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor and U.S.-Swiss Safe Harbor Frameworks. Therefore, the representation set forth in Paragraph 14 was false and misleading.
16. The acts and practices of respondent as alleged in this complaint constitute deceptive acts or practices, in or affecting commerce, in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

THEREFORE, the Federal Trade Commission this twenty-ninth day of September 2015, has issued this complaint against respondent.

By the Commission.

Donald S. Clark
Secretary

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