Facebook Talks Data Portability With the FTC

The goal of the workshop is to examine the potential benefits and challenges to consumers and competition related to data portability.

In its comments, the social network discussed tools that are available to its users, including Download Your Information, Download Your Data (Instagram), Access Your Information and its recently introduced photo transfer tool.

Facebook also reiterated its commitment to the Data Transfer Project, a collaborative effort with Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Twitter that it joined in July 2018.

The company wrote in its comments to the FTC, “We remain committed to ensuring that the current product remains stable and performant for people, and we are also exploring how we might extend this tool, mindful of the need to preserve the privacy of our users and the integrity of our services. Our product decisions are not made in isolation. We’re informed by user interest, policy and regulatory conversations spurred, in part, by our white paper on portability, and our participation in the Data Transfer Project to gather insights from people, policy stakeholders and the developer community.”

Facebook pledged to extend its work on the Data Transfer Project in three areas:

- Improving the reliability, performance and user experience of the product.
- Adding new destination services for photos and video.
- Supporting new use cases and data types.

The social network also examined the various questions surrounding what happens if one person wants to transfer data associated with another person, listing questions that could potentially be raised:

- Should I be able to take my friends' data to another service?
- What are my friends' rights to control their information in that scenario?
- What if people want to export the contents of their phone's address book or a list of their contacts' birthdays to a new service?
- Should a person's contacts—whose information would be shared with the new service—have a say in whether the person may share the information?
- Should I have the right to transfer a group photo uploaded by a friend if I'm in that photo?
- Should I have the right to export content that I created jointly with other people, such as a shared photo album or a document where I drafted one-half of the text?

Facebook concluded, "Facebook supports the passage of comprehensive federal privacy legislation in the U.S., alongside dedicated portability legislation that can help guide the implementation of practical solutions. As policymakers and the commission consider both privacy and portability regulation in the U.S., it is important to keep in mind that harmonization of these regimes with existing laws will help both people and businesses reap the benefits of data portability."

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