

# Facebook near privacy settlement with FTC: report

November 10 2011

---

Facebook will agree to independent privacy audits for 20 years under a proposed settlement with US regulators over changes to its privacy settings, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

The newspaper, quoting people familiar with the situation, said the proposed settlement is awaiting final approval from the commissioners of the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

The Journal said the settlement stems from an investigation into charges made by privacy groups in December 2009 that Facebook engaged in deceptive behavior when changing its privacy settings.

The groups filed a complaint over changes to privacy settings which made aspects of a user's profile -- such as their name, picture, gender and list of friends -- public by default, the newspaper said.

The settlement would require Facebook, which has more than 800 million members, to submit to independent privacy audits for 20 years, it said.

In the future, Facebook will also be required to obtain "express affirmative consent" from its users if it makes "material retroactive changes" to privacy settings, the Journal said.

Google agreed to privacy audits in March in a settlement with the FTC over Google Buzz, the social networking tool it rolled out last year which

spawned a slew of privacy complaints.

Facebook declined to comment on the report but in a recent interview, Facebook's co-founder and chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, explained the social network's privacy settings.

"I think it's really about control," Zuckerberg said in an interview with PBS television's "Charlie Rose" talk show program.

"People have things that they want to share with maybe a single person or a small group," he said. "And they have things that they'd want to share more broadly.

"And the real question for me is 'Do people have the tools that they need in order to make those decisions well?'" he said.

"What we've done in the last year is we've made it so that any time you want to share anything, the privacy control is now right there, and it says exactly who you're going to share with," he said.

Facebook has been dogged by complaints over privacy in the United States and several European countries and the Palo Alto, California-based company named a prominent US lawyer to be director of privacy in September.

(c) 2011 AFP

Citation: Facebook near privacy settlement with FTC: report (2011, November 10) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-11-facebook-privacy-settlement-ftc.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--