

# Privacy expert: Don't like Instagram's new terms of service? Quit.

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Instagram, one of the world's most popular photo applications and sharing services, announced on Monday, Dec. 17, that it would change its terms of service and privacy policy early next year, giving the company and its owner, Facebook, the right to use uploaded images in advertisements and other places without a user's consent.

But consumer outrage has forced Instagram to reconsider its proposed changes, some of which are still expected to take effect on Jan. 16. Despite the promised change of heart, one Indiana University privacy expert said consumers are likely still forgetting that they are the true product of Instagram and similar services, not necessarily their photographs.

"The popularity in a [service](#) like Facebook or Instagram comes largely from the fact that, on the surface, it is free," said Fred H. Cate, director of IU's Center for Applied [Cybersecurity](#) Research. "But [users](#) tend to forget or ignore that the hidden cost of [social networking](#) and other online activities tends to come at the expense of [personal privacy](#)."

"While Instagram has professed surprise at the public's response to its announced changes to its terms of service and promised to revise them, we still don't know what they will be," Cate continued. "And we have to remember that the company attempted the extraordinary grab of users' identities and photos in the first place."

Cate added that users' data—such as who they "follow" and who

"follows" them—could still serve as a virtual goldmine for advertisers. An Instagram "follow" can be akin to "liking" something on [Facebook](#). In his blog post promising to revise the changes to the terms of service, Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom still wrote that "the actions you take" and "your profile photo" could be made public to indicate which businesses a user is "following."

"Whether or not Instagram makes good on its promise to review the changes, the important thing to remember is that consumers must begin to pay more attention to the services they use—online and off—and remember if a company doesn't have a product to sell, it is most likely selling you," Cate said.

"No one wants to read terms of service and privacy policies of services they use, and research suggests that no one does read them," Cate said. "But if a service promises you something for nothing, it is a good idea to figure out what the catch is. [Terms](#) of service and privacy policies are a good place to start."

In the meantime, whether Instagram retreats in the face of public criticism or goes forward with new policies, Cate said users have one simple option to avoid any potential conflict. "You can always delete your account," he said.

Provided by Indiana University

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