

Shutterstock to Pay \$35 Million Over Auto-Renewal and Cancellation Practices

Gonzalo E. Mon

May 15, 2026

According to a complaint filed by the FTC, when the FTC filed a [lawsuit](#) against Adobe over its subscription practices in 2024, people at Shutterstock took notice. When an employee referenced the lawsuit in a Slack communication and worried that Shutterstock would “be next,” a Senior Product Manager responded: “hopefully we can get away with it.” Now we know the answer.

This week, the FTC announced a \$35 million settlement with Shutterstock over alleged violations involving auto-renewals, disclosures, and cancellation. The complaint reflects the Commission’s continued focus on “negative option” features and the ways in which companies present—and obtain consent for—recurring charges.

According to the FTC, Shutterstock failed to clearly and conspicuously disclose key material terms, including that certain products would automatically renew and that consumers could incur cancellation fees. The Commission alleges that these terms were often buried in fine print or otherwise presented in a way that consumers were unlikely to notice before being charged.

The FTC also focused on Shutterstock’s marketing of certain “on-demand packs” as being suitable for a “one-time project” with “no commitment,” while allegedly failing to adequately disclose that these products could trigger automatic renewals. As in other recent cases, the agency is scrutinizing the disconnect between headline claims and the underlying billing structure.

In addition, the complaint alleges that Shutterstock failed to obtain consumers’ express informed consent before charging their payment methods and made it difficult to cancel subscriptions. Consumers were allegedly required to navigate time-consuming customer support channels rather than using simple online cancellation methods.

Under the proposed order, Shutterstock will pay \$35 million and will be required to clearly disclose material terms, obtain express informed consent, and provide straightforward cancellation mechanisms. These requirements mirror the FTC’s now-familiar framework for negative option cases.

If you’re reading this post, wondering whether your company will be next and whether you can get away with it, the answer is maybe. But getting it wrong can be very expensive.