

Tips from the FTC Workshop on Effective Mobile Policy Disclosures

June 9, 2012

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently held a public workshop entitled "In Short: Advertising & Privacy Disclosures in a Digital World" exploring effective advertising and privacy disclosures in social media and on mobile devices. Our full summary of the workshop is covered [here](#). Panelists addressed key challenges in creating effective mobile privacy disclosures, including spatial limitations of small screens, overly technical language, and complex layouts of privacy policies and terms and conditions.

To overcome these challenges, panelists advised that companies consider consumer behavior before creating and implementing mobile privacy disclosures. The following tips, based on the panelists' viewpoints, are designed to help mobile advertisers convey privacy information and disclosures in a consumer-friendly way.

- Be concise. Distill privacy policies down to the elements relevant to the consumer. Layer text by providing a summary of key disclosures on top of a full policy. This practice makes disclosures more accessible. Alternatively, explore shortened formats such as the "short form" privacy policy used by Truste.
- Be consistent. Take into account all elements of the disclosures, including the front-end and back-end layers. Front-end layers include the design, timing, and language of the disclosures. The back-end layers of disclosures should be reflected in the policies consumers read. Review data retention practices to make sure policies accurately reflect whether consumer data is shared, shed, or stored.
- Be clear. With regard to third party data collections, tell consumers when third party data collections take place and what happens to their data once collected. Allow consumers the ability to choose how much of their data is accessed. Further, privacy disclosures should be clear and conspicuous, not coy. Clearly communicating an advertiser's practices is not only good business, it helps build trust with consumers.
- Be considerate. Consider when consumers are most likely to pay attention to privacy disclosures and provide them at the most relevant time. Many mobile applications provide privacy disclosures upon download, when consumers are unfamiliar with the application and may not pay attention. However, consumers may be more likely to pay attention prior to completing a mobile transaction or purchase. Consider how best to convey the information to maximize visibility.

Mobile technology is increasingly integrated into consumers' lives. While some panelists advocated flexible standards to accommodate new technology and consumer uses, others countered that advertising must conform to the legal standards, not vice versa. All agreed that the basic advertising

principles of clear communication of material terms apply regardless of format. The FTC welcomes [comments](#) on this and related web and mobile disclosure and privacy issues until July 11, 2012.

Written with assistance by [Kristi Wolff](#).