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Graebel ReloTRENDSSM



Social widgets – the buttons that appear on websites that encourage visitors to share content with friends through Facebook, Twitter, and Google – are actually tracking visitors' behavior even if they don't click on the icons.¹ This new revelation sheds more attention on growing concerns of privacy violations on social media and other Internet websites.

LIKE IT OR NOT, THE “LIKE” BUTTON IS FOLLOWING YOUR EVERY MOVE.

These buttons have grown in popularity, with millions of web pages adding them in the last year. Websites add these social plug-ins as a means of attracting new visitors to their sites, and it appears to work. Consumer-oriented websites that added the Facebook Like button have reported more than 200-percent more traffic on their sites.²

HOW DO THE BUTTONS WORK?

When a website visitor clicks the button, he/she shares the content on his/her Facebook profile page. Additionally, the button records how many people have liked the content, so visitors can gauge its popularity.

However, “like” buttons use cookies to track and trace web browsers, even if visitors do not actually use the buttons. In doing so, the widgets are able to link an individual's browsing activities to his/her Facebook or Twitter account.³

To be tracked, users need only log in to their Facebook or Twitter accounts once in a one-month period. Even if they close their browsers or turn off their computers – without logging off their social

media accounts – the sites will continue to collect data.⁴ The only sure way to stop the tracking is to always log out of Facebook and Twitter.

GROWING BACKLASH

In the past year, five privacy-related bills have been introduced in Congress, though to date, none have been passed into law.⁵ Additionally, a class action lawsuit has been filed against Facebook for using its social widget to track Internet users and collect their private and sensitive information as they browse the web.⁶

RESPECTING THE PRIVACY OF OUR CUSTOMERS

Protecting customer privacy is important to Graebel, and as a licensee of the TRUSTe Privacy Program, Graebel has implemented a strictly practiced privacy policy. Personally identifiable information is not collected unless website visitors decide to provide this information. Additionally, Graebel does not share, sell, rent, or trade personal information for promotional purposes.



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¹ Amir Efrati. “Like Button Follows Web Users.” The Wall Street Journal, May 19, 2011.

² Arnold Roosendaal. “Facebook tracks and traces everyone: Like this!” Tilburg Law School Legal Studies Research Paper Series, March 2011.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Amir Efrati. “Like Button Follows Web Users.” The Wall Street Journal, May 19, 2011.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Wendy Davis. “Facebook Sued for Tracking People with ‘Like’ Button.” MediaPostNews, June 15, 2011.