



# **Social Advertising Best Practices**

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**The IAB User-Generated Content & Social Media Committee has developed these Best Practices.**

**About the IAB's User-Generated Content & Social Media Committee:**

The User-Generated Content & Social Media Committee of the IAB is comprised of over 150 member companies dedicated to helping develop and expand the user-generated content space as a viable advertising platform. The committee works to educate marketers and agencies on the strength of user-generated content and social media as a marketing vehicle. A full list of Committee member companies can be found at:

[http://www.iab.net/member\\_center/councils\\_committees\\_working\\_groups/committees/user\\_generated\\_content\\_social\\_media\\_committee](http://www.iab.net/member_center/councils_committees_working_groups/committees/user_generated_content_social_media_committee)

**This document can be found on the IAB website at:**

<http://www.iab.net/socialads>

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## Table of Contents

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<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3-5</b>
<b>Social Ad Definitions &amp; Examples</b>	<b>6-12</b>
Definitions & Key Terms	6-8
Examples	9-12
<b>Consumer Policies</b>	<b>13-15</b>
Opt-in Recommendations	13
Opt-out Recommendations	14
Examples	14-15
<b>Privacy Guidelines</b>	<b>16-18</b>
Data Capture	16-17
Data Disclosure	17
Data Usage	17
Examples	18

## Executive Summary

Social media is big and getting bigger, providing marketers with a combination of reach, relationships, and relevance:

- **Reach:** Social media has overtaken email as the most popular consumer activity, according to a recent Nielsen study. Importantly, consumer growth is coming from an older demographic than social media's historical base; for example, Facebook's strongest growth is coming from 35-49 year-olds, adding twice as many 50-64-year-olds as opposed to those under 18. (Nielsen "Global Faces and Networked Places," March 9, 2009; MediaPost Blogs Research Brief, "Social Networking Is No Respector of Age," March 18, 2009.)
- **Relationships:** Social media's strength is in the personal connections it enables, the peer-to-peer contact, providing reasons for consumers to visit regularly and for extended periods of time.
- **Relevance:** Consumers are extremely engaged with the content and connections that their friends are creating because of its personal relevance.

Marketers are looking to maximize the effectiveness of this new medium and are developing social advertising that heightens relevance and engagement through the use of profile data within the ad units themselves, as well as the use of social graph data to target ads.

These Best Practices are intended to help protect consumer privacy, ensure transparency for what and how data is being used, and to define consumer permissions. The purpose of this document is to provide best practices that illustrate, inform, and facilitate greater adoption of the medium by defining creative components, data usage, consumer control, and privacy guidelines and by providing social advertising examples.

This document outlines recommendations for these key social advertising topics and is intended for social networks, publishers, ad agencies, marketers, and service providers delivering social advertising. These best practices were developed via a thorough examination of the critical consumer, media and advertiser issues to help social media further realize its advertising potential.

**Definition of a Social Ad:** An online ad that incorporates user interactions that the consumer has agreed to display and be shared. The resulting ad displays these interactions along with the user's persona (picture and/or name) within the ad content.

1. Data Used for Social Ads: Social ads can use 1) profile data, such as name, likeness, groups and installed applications, etc. 2) social data, such as the explicit connections between individuals and 3) interaction data, such data that is captured about the interactions between online connections (friends).
2. Ingredients of a Social Ad:
  - a. Ad Content: Social ads can use profile data or social data in the ad unit itself or in the immediate context of the ad unit to customize the message or allow interaction.
  - b. Targeting: Social ads can use profile data and social graph data to target ads. In addition to targeting via standard ad targeting technologies, this social targeting may include the ability for individuals to select ads and deliver them to their social connections (pass-alongs).
  - c. Functionality: Social ads can allow some kind of social interaction (sharing with a friend, commenting, collaborative filtering, etc.) within the ad unit itself or in a landing page or interstitial experience.
3. Context for Delivering a Social Ad: Social ads can be delivered within the context of a social network or social web site where a consumer has established explicit connections with other consumers, or can also be delivered outside of social networks or sites when the following special care is taken with respect to consumer notice:
  - Clear information about the ad's context and presentation
  - Clear information about what their social connections will see
  - Explicit control over how profile data and social data is used and with whom it is shared
  - Explicit opt-in to the data that is to be shared
4. Consumer Control: Since it is essential for social ads to be trusted in order to achieve broad adoption, it is important for consumers to have visibility and control of what can be shared with their social connections. The following special care is to be taken with respect to consumer choice:
  - Opt-In: A social ad should show consumers what would be shared with their friends prior to consumers choosing to share their information, with explicit approval of the message to friends prior to usage. Consumers can waive future notices by opting-in to "auto-sharing," wherein their consent to share information via social ads is explicit.
  - Opt-Out: Once they have explicitly opted-in, consumers should also be able to see and control how their information is used within a social ad directly from the ad. For example, they should be able to navigate from the ad to a page

that tells them who is serving the ad, how their information is used to deliver the ad, and have the ability to opt-out of their information being used in the delivery of that ad.

5. Privacy Guidelines: Overall privacy guidelines should abide by the general privacy principles established by the IAB:

[http://www.iab.net/iab\\_products\\_and\\_industry\\_services/508676/508813/1464](http://www.iab.net/iab_products_and_industry_services/508676/508813/1464)

The data available for socializing ads is typically not covered within the scope of general online advertising privacy policies, so specific guidelines are called out within this document. For instance, social data and data disclosed by consumers should only be used for social ads within the social domain for which they have disclosed that data and after they have opted in to share this data. Consumer profile data should also only be able to be accessed for social ads once consumers have consented to data access, and consumers should be notified of all data that has been accessed, collected, how this data is used, and who owns this data.

## Social Ad Definitions & Examples

### Definitions & Key Terms

With the Internet becoming more interconnected and social every day, it is important to carefully define terms. **A Social Ad is defined as:**

*An online ad that incorporates user interactions that the consumer has agreed to display and be shared. The resulting ad displays these interactions along with the user's persona (picture and/or name) within the ad content.*

Consumers of social media actively provide information to the social domain they are visiting in order to get the most benefit and value from their online experience as they connect and interact with friends. Some of the information provided to the site is personal, while some is social or interpersonal. Examples of profile data relevant to social ads include (but are not limited to): age, gender, location, interests, and photos. Social data consists of the explicit connections between friends, whether those are real-world or online connections, and ongoing interactions between those individuals. This type of social data is sometimes referred to as the "social graph," as in a map or record of all the explicit connections between individuals. Interpersonal or interaction information is the data recorded about the interactions between online connections (friends).

Whereas behavioral targeting uses information collected on an individual's web browsing behavior ([http://www.iab.net/wiki/index.php/Behavioral\\_Targeting](http://www.iab.net/wiki/index.php/Behavioral_Targeting)), social ads utilize a person's declared profile, social connection, and interaction data within the ad unit itself. Behavioral targeting is about the information used to deliver ads; social advertising is about sharing information and allowing messaging between consumers. The best practices presented in this document are unique to social advertising. However, social advertising and behavioral targeting are not mutually exclusive, because a marketer can use behavioral targeting to deliver social ads.

### Behaviorally Targeted Ads and Social Ads:

Behaviorally Targeted Ad	Social Ad
A behaviorally targeted ad typically tracks the domain(s) where a user has visited via a cookie, groups this online behavior within a defined segment and then retargets that consumer based upon their defined behavioral segment as that user visits sites across the Web.	A Social Ad requires the consumer to interact with content that the user opted-in to be shared with friends in their social graph. This opted-in interaction is then communicated to the user's online friends via a Social Ad that communicates the user's interaction along with their persona (picture & name).

Behaviorally targeted ads are about targeting users based upon their online behavior. Social ads are about incorporating user interactions and the user's persona into the ad content so this content can be delivered to friends within their social graph.

The social data provided by consumers can be utilized by marketers and social media publishers to create a highly relevant and engaging social ad experience for individuals visiting social sites. First, social sites can use profile data and social graph data to target highly relevant ads to specific individuals. Knowing that an individual lives in Evanston, Illinois, is a 24-year-old graduate of Northwestern University, and has explicitly expressed an interest in running allows a social site and a local running store to deliver very relevant advertising to that consumer. Secondly, if this individual has friends on the social site who share her interests or who may even have recommended or connected with the local running store, the ad experience can become even more relevant by virtue of a consumer endorsement in the ad itself. A friend's photo and explicit endorsement or explicitly shared information about how the friend has interacted with the local store can be displayed in the ad, making the ad personally relevant to an unprecedented degree.

The ad experience can take on a third social component by virtue of the way an individual responds to the ad. Instead of simply clicking through to a landing page, social websites can provide social response mechanisms in the ads themselves. The "target" can become the "arrow" by passing such an ad along to other select friends, linking themselves to the advertisers explicitly (by friending or fanning), or even commenting on or in the ad and having those comments passed along in viral channels provided by the social site and ad vehicle.

It is important to note that social advertising is paid media, and is different from earned media, which refers to favorable publicity gained through promotional efforts or implied or expressed endorsement from user generated content. Advertisers who purchase a social ad will not necessarily generate social conversations.

Social ads also introduce new variables into the measurement of ad effectiveness. In addition to standard ad metrics like impressions, clicks, click-through rate, and conversion rate, social ads can allow advertisers to quantify the social interaction generated by ads. How many individuals explicitly shared the ad with how many friends? How many "relevant actions taken" did the ads create? Refer to the IAB's **Social Media Ad Metrics Definitions**:

<http://www.iab.net/socialmetrics>

The combination of improved targeting of ads with social ad content and social response mechanisms is potentially transformative for online advertising. However, a high degree of transparency and control needs to be given to individuals on social sites given that this entire capability rests on the data they have explicitly provided to the social site. One component of transparency is the venue for the social interactions and ads. Social ads are typically delivered within the context of a social network or social website where a consumer has explicitly established connections with other consumers, has provided profile data, and is accustomed to the data being used to deliver a customized and more personally relevant experience.

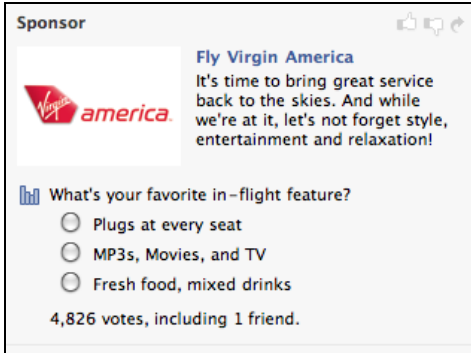
It is also possible for social ads to be delivered outside of social networks or websites using advanced ad targeting and distribution techniques. In these cases, special consideration to the context and presentation of the ads is absolutely mandatory. Individuals must be given clear information about what they are seeing and explicit control over how profile data and social data are used and with whom it is shared.

## Glossary

- **Social Ad:** An online ad that incorporates user interactions that the consumer has agreed to display and be shared. The resulting ad displays these interactions along with the user's persona (picture and/or name) within the ad content.
- **Social Graph (Social Data):** A map or record of all the explicit connections between individuals
- **Interaction Data (Interpersonal Information):** Data that is captured about the interactions between online connections (friends)
- **Profile Data:** Name, image, demographic information such as age and gender, location, interests, groups, and installed applications

## Examples

### Facebook Engagement Ad



This social ad prompts a consumer to take a poll. After responding and opting-in, the resulting ad featuring the consumer's interaction is then communicated to their friends within the Facebook newsfeed.

#### Uses...

<b>Profile data?</b>	Yes	Name & photo is used in newsfeed ad
<b>Social graph?</b>	Yes	Newsfeed ads are sent to known friends
<b>Interaction data?</b>	Yes	Uses interaction from poll as communication to friends in newsfeed ad

### MySpace Interaction Ad



This social ad communicates a consumer's interaction from an opt-in ad to that consumer's friends after explicit opt-in from the consumer. The resulting ad includes the opt-in consumer's photo, first name, and description of his interaction in the ad that is delivered to friends.

#### Uses...

<b>Profile data?</b>	Yes	Name and photo used in confirmation and ad that friends see
<b>Social graph?</b>	Yes	Ads are displayed to known friends
<b>Interaction data?</b>	Yes	Interactions from initial ad are communicated to friends

## Buddy Media Application Ad

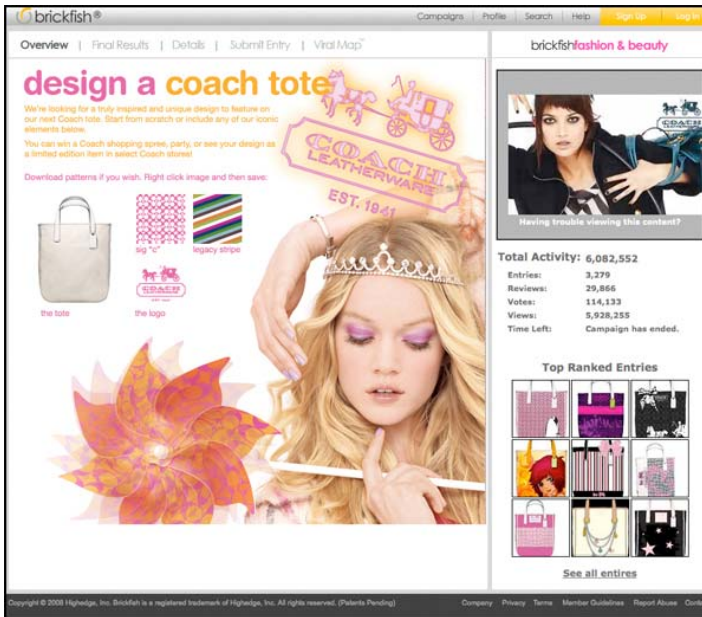


Consumers can insert their profile photos within celebrity hairstyles and share this interaction with friends by having their style posted to friend's newsfeeds.

### Uses...

<b>Profile data?</b>	Yes	Photos are accessed and used with the application content
<b>Social graph?</b>	Yes	Friends are displayed within the application, and notifications are sent to friends
<b>Interaction data?</b>	Yes	Interactions from actions the consumer takes in the application are shared with friends

## Brickfish Social Media Ad



Consumers share their branded user-generated content amongst their peers and on their social networks. Brand interactions are tracked across the web and globally.

### Uses...

<b>Profile data?</b>	Yes	Age/Location/Social network participation
<b>Social graph?</b>	Yes	Content is disseminated amongst their peers
<b>Interaction data?</b>	Yes	Interactions from actions the consumer takes in participation with the brand are shared with friends

## Socialmedia.com Word of Mouth Ad



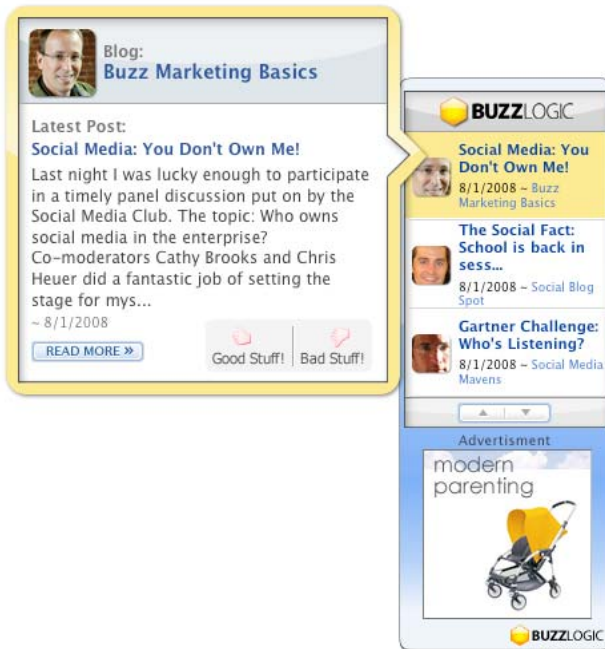
After a consumer has interacted with an opt-in ad, then the resulting word-of-mouth ad featuring the consumer's persona is shared with the consumer's friends.

### Uses...

<b>Profile data?</b>	Yes	Photo and first name are inserted into ads
<b>Social graph?</b>	Yes	Consumer's friends see their interactions from ads
<b>Interaction data?</b>	Yes	Interactions the consumer has within an ad are shared with their friends

## Other Ad Formats

The examples above utilize all three criteria for a social ad: profile data, social graph, and interaction data. There are other ad formats targeted to social content which leverage one or two of the attributes of social ads. One example is Conversation Ad Targeting™ where consumers with similar interests are connected to each other by following content posted by credible authors—specifically blogs engaged in conversations with each other through trusted references in the form of links. These ads also have the potential to integrate additional social features such as polling, votes, share, and engagement with the ad itself.



Uses...		
<b>Profile data?</b>	No	While social network profile data is not used, blogger / author content is used within the ad itself
<b>Social graph?</b>	Yes	Uses blogger link or social graph to target ad
<b>Interaction data?</b>	Yes	Engagement features where consumers can actually view connected content and vote on it

## Consumer Policies

The following section outlines recommendations around opt-in and opt-out policies when creating and delivering social ads.

### Opt-in Recommendations

**Profile Creation:** From initial profile creation to ongoing usage of this data, it is important for consumers to have a complete understanding of what, how, when, and to whom their data or likeness will be used for delivering social ads. Upon initial creation of a profile within a social media site, consumers should be given the option to share their information for social ads within the actual domain they are joining and potentially outside of that social network as well. Beyond this general opt-in for social ads, consumers should also have the ability to opt-in to sharing information with friends and different networks of friends they are connected with.

**Ad Preview:** When incorporating consumer profile data into social ads, advertisers will need to show consumers exactly how their likeness or information will be used within a preview of the ad itself. This preview should be available to the consumer prior to the ad's actual distribution within the social media site. Additionally, consumers should be able to select what groups of friends will see the ad or opt-in to having the ad served to their entire network. There must be an explicit approval of the ad by the consumer prior to its distribution. Optionally, a consumer may waive future notices with an auto opt-in function, where consent to share information is assumed on a go-forward basis unless otherwise stated through an opt-out action.

**Benefit Statements:** As privacy concerns regarding social advertising continue to dominate much of the press, it is important for publishers to also provide strong benefit statements to their consumers so that consumers understand why targeted relevant advertising will be beneficial to them. Some potential benefits to highlight are:

- The ability to receive offers and information about goods and services relevant to your interests, affinities, or friends
- The control to minimize the serving of irrelevant ads
- The ability to discover new products and services directly from your friends, networks, and credible authors
- The ability to access free content on the Web that is supported by paid advertising, including social advertising

## **Opt-Out Recommendations**

When an online ad is delivered to consumers, they typically have no idea who is delivering the ad. However with social ads, which incorporate the consumer's persona (picture and/or name), it is important for consumers to have the clear ability to opt-out from their information being used in the delivery of that social ad and within the ad unit itself. The ad will need to contain visual cues either within it or include a link to a landing page providing more information to the consumer so they can both understand how their information is being used and have the ability to opt-out from their information being used. As with standard opt-out policies where consumers have clear notice and choice, it is important that consumers are provided with a specific notice regarding how their information is being used to deliver the ad, including who is serving the ad, how the consumer's information is being used to deliver the ad, and providing the ability for the consumer to opt-out of having his/her information used in the delivery of ads from the identified vendor.

## **Examples**

The following are examples of best practices used to provide consumers with opt-in and opt-out language:

- o Google Ad Preferences: <http://tinyurl.com/dgmcek>
- o Google Privacy Center: [http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacy\\_ads.html](http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacy_ads.html)
- o Facebook Connect:  
[http://wiki.developers.facebook.com/index.php/Facebook\\_Connect\\_Policies](http://wiki.developers.facebook.com/index.php/Facebook_Connect_Policies)
- o NAI - Behavioral Opt-Out:  
[http://www.networkadvertising.org/managing/opt\\_out.asp](http://www.networkadvertising.org/managing/opt_out.asp)

## **Three-Step Opt-In Process**

For enabling consumers to opt-in to sharing interactions within an ad with friends, below is an example of a recommended three-step process:

**1. User responds to Social Ad**

share with your friends

I would describe my hairstyle since my baby as . . .

- ▶ Sticky
- ▶ Mom-ish
- ▶ Boring

Suave

What's this?

**2. User sees her response and confirms to share**

share with your friends

Here's the message your friends will see.  
**Click below to confirm and share!**

Marissa thinks her hairstyle is boring since her baby. Say YES to beautiful without paying the price. Suave.

Share Edit

Suave

What's this?

**3. User's response is shared with friends**

Marissa thinks her hairstyle is boring since her baby. Say YES to beautiful without paying the price. Suave.

Learn More

Suave

## MySpace Ad Preference

As an example, consumers—upon logging into a social network—are taken to a preference page where they are shown the type of social ad targeting available to them. In addition to being able to select preferred ads by category, they are shown a list of additional interests, group affiliation, friend networks, or other data gathered from their social network.

### Settings

[View My Profile](#)  
[Edit Profile](#)

[Contact Info](#) | [Account](#) | [Password](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Spam](#) | [Notifications](#) | [Applications](#) | [MySpaceID](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Miscellaneous](#)  
[Ad Categories](#) | [No More CAPTCHAs](#)

#### **Ad Categories**

Select your areas of interest. When possible, MySpace will try to show you ads that match your selections. This applies to ads that appear in the Sponsored Links modules throughout the site.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Enthusiast    | <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneur       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Fan         | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Lover       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment Buff | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmentalist   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music Lover        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fashion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movie Goer         | <input type="checkbox"/> Foodie             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Nut         | <input type="checkbox"/> DIY'er             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video Gamer        | <input type="checkbox"/> Dating             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tech Enthusiast    | <input type="checkbox"/> Traveler           |

## Privacy Guidelines

Overall privacy guidelines should abide by the general privacy principles established by the IAB:

[http://www.iab.net/iab\\_products\\_and\\_industry\\_services/508676/508813/1464](http://www.iab.net/iab_products_and_industry_services/508676/508813/1464)

Social media offers a potentially rich data environment for marketers to better understand online consumers. The data and the use of this data may not be considered under traditional online privacy policies, creating a potential need for additional privacy policies to govern what and how social data may be used in the context of social advertising.

Privacy guidelines ensure that data collected from consumers is done with consumer consent, that consumers have appropriate notice and choice in what and how their data is used, and that data access and use are consistent with the privacy expectation set with the consumer. Given the profile, social graph, and interaction data that can be collected and used from social sites to deliver social ads, additional privacy policy content may need to be presented to consumers to govern the data capture, data disclosure, and data use.

Organizations should not knowingly collect social and profile data from children under 13 for social advertising or knowingly engage in social advertising directed to children under 13 without obtaining verifiable parental consent as set forth in the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

### **Data Capture**

Data capture refers to information that is accessed and collected about consumers for use within social ads.

- **Opt-in Requirement:** Profile data submitted by consumers within a given social network may be accessed for use within a social ad. It is important that before this data is accessed for use within an ad, the consumer explicitly opts-in or consents to approving their data to be used in the delivery of social ads. This consent may be provided when consumers initially input their profile information when they join a social network, or as part of an option to enable access to their profile information once they have joined the social site.
- **Profile Data:** After consumers join a social site they should be able to view and modify their profile information, as well as adjust what data is accessed for use within a social ad. This includes being able to specify whether their picture and name can be accessed by a social ad.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Parties:** If a 3<sup>rd</sup> party accesses the consumer's social data for the purposes of social advertising, the consumer should be notified of this access. And, these 3<sup>rd</sup> parties should not be able to store consumers' profile data independent of the original consumer profile. This provision prevents 3<sup>rd</sup> parties from accessing and aggregating

profile data from consumers. The recommended maximum time a consumer's data should be cached is no longer than 24 hours, and this cache is only in memory, meaning the consumer's profile data should not be stored to disk by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties.

- **Personally Identifiable Information:** If consumers have disclosed any personally identifiable information as part of their profile for the social ad, then Reasonable Data Security applies. Additional protections such as encryption or hashing methods may be required depending on the sensitivity of the data.

## **Data Disclosure**

Data disclosure policies communicate to consumers what data is accessed and how this data is being used. These policies are typically available within a publisher's Privacy Policy, and can also be made available on other pages the consumer frequently visits.

- **Notice:** First and foremost, consumers should be notified of all data accessed about them and how this data is used. The language should clearly itemize the scope of data accessed about consumers, including any profile data, aggregated data about consumer's interaction with other consumers within their social graph, and/or general interactions with other consumers. Consumers should also be notified when their social data, including associated friends, may be used to target social ads to them and in advertising delivered to them and/or their friends.
- **Choice:** Prior to use of consumers' profile data for social ads, consumers should explicitly opt-in and be notified of what profile data will be used for the social ad.
- **Profile Data:** As part of the notification policy, consumers should be informed as to how long their profile data may be used for commercial purposes, and how often it may or may not be updated.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Parties:** Any data shared with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for social advertising, either in the form of just being accessed or if the 3<sup>rd</sup> party stores consumer data, should be communicated to consumers.

## **Data Usage**

Data usage policies govern the scope of how data should be used that is accessed from the consumer. Any social data about consumers should only be used for social ads targeted to consumers within the social network for which the data was collected, unless the consumer has explicitly opted-in to their data being shared within another domain for social ads.

## **Examples**

Privacy policies that exemplify the best practices communicated within this section include the following examples:

- As an example of content that provides consumers with notice of what and how their profile information is using used, specifically for commercial purposes, refer to Facebook’s privacy policy: [www.facebook.com/privacy](http://www.facebook.com/privacy). Note that Facebook’s privacy controls also empower consumers to turn off and on what data can be accessed by whom.
- For an example of how personally identifiable information (PII) data is being used and what is disclosed to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, refer to Kaboodle’s privacy policy: <http://www.kaboodle.com/zm/tosandprivacy>
- And lastly, as an example of how to explain a consumer’s profile information being used on partner sites, refer to LinkedIn’s privacy policy: <https://www.linkedin.com/secure/settings?adv=&goback=%2Eaas>