

West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Tip of the Week

Periodically, the Privacy Office may issue tips for the purpose of assisting you in making informed decisions in your “away from work” life. The following tip is for that purpose.

Social Networking Tip #2

Question:

Last week you gave me some tips on Facebook (FB) and I finally set up a FB page (yeah, I’m learning the lingo too)! When I’ve been on FB, I noticed that the advertising seems to specifically be targeted at me. It is as if the computer knows my personal likes and location. How does it know how much I like shoes and fitness gear?

Answer:

Many social networking sites use what is known as behavioral marketing or targeting. This method of advertising uses an individual’s personal information, mainly based on what has been searched on that computer. They do this for the purpose of targeting an individual as a potential customer for their goods or services. Facebook, for example, uses tracking cookies to examine an individual’s web-browsing behavior, interactions, and even the individual’s location. A cookie is a piece of data which is stored by a website within a browser which subsequently sends information back to the website.

Tracking cookies will send information while you are logged into Facebook unless they are manually deleted. In order to manually delete cookies in Internet Explorer:

1. Go to the control bar at the top of your Internet Explorer browser and click on “tools”.
2. Click on “internet options”.
3. Under browsing history where it says “delete temporary files, history, saved passwords, and web form information”, hit “delete”.
4. Click “cookies”.
5. When it says “are you sure you want to delete all cookies in the Temporary Internet File Folder”, click “yes”.

This is just a temporary solution and in order to block future cookies (this may prevent some websites from being viewed correctly):

1. Go to the control bar at the top of your Internet Explorer browser and click on “tools”.
2. Click on “internet options”.
3. Click on the “Privacy” tab.
4. Under “Settings”, move the slider to the top to block all cookies.
5. Click “OK”.

Another recommendation is choose a browser to use exclusively for Facebook and other social networking sites. This will allow for your information to be kept separated and private from social networking sites.