

User outrage forces Instagram changes

SAN FRANCISCO, USA: Instagram has backed down from a planned policy change that appear to clear the way for the mobile photo sharing service to sell pictures without compensation, after users cried foul.



"The language we proposed also raised questions about whether your photos can be part of an advertisement," Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom said in a blog post.

"We do not have plans for anything like this and because of that we're going to remove the language that raised the question," he continued.

"To be clear: it is not our intention to sell your photos."

Changes to the Instagram privacy policy and terms of service set to take effect from 16 January included wording that appeared to allow people's pictures to be used by advertisers at Instagram or Facebook worldwide and royalty-free.

Twitter and Instagram forums were abuzz over the phrasing, as users debated whether to delete their accounts before the new rules kicked in.

Systrom did not specify how the wording for the terms of service would be changed.

Originally proposed portions of the new policy that rankled users included: "You hereby grant to Instagram non-exclusive, fully paid and royalty-free, transferable, sub-licensable, worldwide license to use the content that you post on or through the service."

The terms also stated that "a business or other entity may pay us to display your username, likeness, photos, and/or actions you take, in connection with paid or sponsored content or promotions, without any compensation to you."

Instagram contended that it was not claiming ownership of people's pictures.

"Our intention in updating the terms was to communicate that we'd like to experiment with innovative advertising that feels appropriate on Instagram," Systrom said.

"Instead it was interpreted by many that we were going to sell your photos to others without any compensation. This is not true and it is our mistake that this language is confusing."

Some people tweeted in defence of Instagram, arguing that it was a "mega-business" that needs to make money.

Instagram said that the changes were part of a move to share information with Facebook, which bought the company this year.

Internet rights activists at the Electronic Frontier Foundation called on Instagram to reconsider the new policy, saying it violated "key principles" for social networking services.

Instagram, which has some 100m users, is seeking to route photo viewers to its own website, where it has the potential to make money from advertisements or other mechanisms.

This month, the service made it impossible for Internet users to view images in messages at Twitter. Previously, Instagram pictures shared in messages tweeted from smartphones could be viewed unaltered on Twitter.

Twitter responded by adding Instagram-style photo sharing features of its own.

Yahoo joined the fray last week by making it more enticing for iPhone users to use its Flickr photo service.

Instagram rose to prominence with the help of Twitter, but has now distanced itself from the messaging service since Facebook bought it in September.

The original price was pegged at US\$1bn but the final value was less because of a decline in the Facebook's share price.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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