

The Value of Privacy Policy Statements

By Pete Prestipino

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The single most important concern among Web users (besides avoiding the onslaught of SPAM) is maintaining the privacy of their personal information. As unsurprising as this is, most websites have not addressed this issue by implementing privacy policy statements. The reason may be that webmasters and site owners have a difficult time figuring out what a privacy policy should contain. If you want to write up a privacy policy statement, it is "best practice" to include answers to the following:

Why You Are Collecting Information

Site operators collect user information for many reasons; from contributing to customized shopping experiences to sending newsletters and special promotions via email. Make sure to establish clear guidelines about what you intend to use the information for now, and in the future. Emphasize the positive, but don't be afraid to tell them why you need the information.

Who Will Have Access to the Information You Collect

Make it clear from the "get-go" if you are planning on selling, sharing, leasing or renting user information with anyone. It is a common occurrence for the information visitors provide to end up on a spam list or in a corporate database so do your best to tell them up front. This excerpt from 7Search.com's privacy policy is typical of forthright privacy language:

"The information that you make available to us when you complete our forms will never be sold, rented or made available to other companies for any purpose whatsoever. Your information is only to be used in relation to the 7Search family of Internet services. We may occasionally use your email to inform you about the 7Search family of services."

Can Users "Opt Out?"

Make it quick and easy for users to withdraw their information or limit who has access to it. Detailing the steps for opting out within your privacy policy will cut down on complaints and provide users with more control over their information.

What do I do When I Have Privacy Policy?

Once you have developed your privacy policy, follow these two simple rules:

Post your privacy policy everywhere you collect information from users.

Apply your policy consistently. You must do precisely what you say you will do in your privacy

policy. On an issue this important, there is no room for compromise.

To learn more about the importance of privacy policies visit ValidatedSite.com

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