

# Opinion: Know what you are agreeing to

By Daniel Rozansky

There is a cost to “free.” There is an additional cost to speed. It’s called privacy.

Each day we pay these costs to download movies, music and buy things on phones, tablets or computers. We agree to terms of service without thinking about the implications. But every day there’s a new rash of lawsuits over privacy rights. What’s the solution? Content providers could create more succinct terms of service to benefit consumers. As a byproduct, they will benefit, too.

The speed-for-privacy trade-off begins with free websites like Google, Yahoo, YouTube and Pandora. It continues with online stores that sift through the clutter to speed up shopping and direct us to products we might like based on where we live, shopping history and website visits.

But what are the websites and content providers getting in return for providing us with this useful information? Important information about us.

Privacy is a commodity. Your personal information is being bought and sold with your approval when you agree to the terms of service. Does anyone bother to read Facebook’s or iTunes’ terms of service or take the time to understand what they are agreeing to? Parents, do you have any idea what personal information your children are giving up? Probably not. That’s why websites and other online service providers should voluntarily agree to shorter terms-of-service language so consumers can identify what important privacy and other rights they give away when clicking “I Agree.”

First, an abbreviated terms of service should clearly state the information being collected. As information available through technology extends further and further past such simple things as your name and address, the privacy becomes less apparent. For example, the GPS technology that maps your route home also can track where you are right now or log where you go every day. Each time you visit a website, content providers collect “cookies” coupled with your IP address to create a log of your online behavior.

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