Microsoft Provides Tips to Help Protect Your Online Image
Tuesday, January 24, 2012 04:00:00 PM (GMT)

Microsoft encourages individuals to examine their online reputation and offers tips to start the new year with the best digital foot forward.

REDMOND, Wash., Jan. 24, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- In observance of Data Privacy Day 2012, Microsoft Corp. is releasing new data about consumer behaviors online and is offering guidance and tips to help people better manage their online profiles and maintain a positive reputation. In an increasingly connected world, everything people do online, from responding to emails and texts to clicking the "like" and "retweet" buttons on favorite Web pages, uploading photos and making purchases online, contributes to their online reputation.

(Logo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20000822/MSFTLOGO)

Although 2012 is still new, Microsoft recommends people resolve to actively monitor and safeguard their online reputations.

Microsoft commissioned a survey* of 5,000 people that revealed a wide variance of online behaviors and attitudes and explored the resulting impact to people's overall online profiles and reputations. With respondents from the U.S., Canada, Germany, Ireland and Spain, the research shows that although 91 percent of people have done something to manage their overall online profile at some point, a smaller percentage feel in control of their online reputation (67 percent) and fewer than half actively think about the long-term consequences of their online activities (44 percent). Further details on this survey and Microsoft's commitment to privacy and involvement in Data Privacy Day can be found at http://www.microsoft.com/privacy/dpd.

"Your online reputation is shaped by your interactions in the online world and spans the disparate and varied data about you, whether created and posted by you or others. This information can have a lasting presence online, and can affect your life in many ways — from maintaining friendships to helping you keep or land a new job," said Brendon Lynch, chief privacy officer, Microsoft. "Our research reinforces the fact that people want a range of privacy options. Microsoft is committed to offering meaningful choices and helping to ensure that people have the tools to make informed choices online to better manage their privacy and online reputations."

To help people put their best digital foot forward, Microsoft is offering the following tips to help cultivate and maintain a positive online reputation:

- **Stay vigilant and conduct your own "reputation report" from time to time.**
  - Search all variations of your name in Bing and other popular search engines, and evaluate if the results reflect the reputation you'd like to share with the world, including current or future employers, colleagues, friends and family members.
  - Research found that 37 percent of adults rarely or never do this.*
- **Consider separating your professional and personal profiles.**
  - When you are job hunting, applying to a school or looking for new insurance or a loan, remember that your online profile can be a determining factor for hiring managers and application reviewers. Be sure to use different email addresses, screen names, referring blogs and websites for each profile, and avoid cross-referencing personal sites.
  - Fifty-seven percent of adults think about taking steps to keep their work and personal profiles private; however, 17 percent of people have inadvertently shared information online that was intended to remain private. Most commonly shared are details about one's personal life (56 percent) and personal photos (38 percent).*
- **Adjust your privacy settings.**
  - In Internet Explorer 9 or other Web browsers and on social networking sites, personal blogs and other places where you maintain personal data, review and use the privacy settings to help manage who can see your information, how people can search for you, who can comment and how to block unwanted access.
  - According to the survey, 49 percent of adults do not use privacy settings on social networking sites.*

- **Think before you share.**
    - Think about what you are posting (particularly personal photos and videos), who you are sharing the information with, and how it will impact your reputation. Talk with friends and family about what you do and do not want shared about you, and ask them to remove anything you don't want disclosed.
    - Fourteen percent of people have been negatively impacted by the online activities of others. Of those, 21 percent believe it led to being fired from a job, 16 percent to being refused health care, 16 percent to being turned down for a job they were applying for, and 15 percent to being turned down for a mortgage.*
- **Be a good digital citizen.**
    - The Web has a long memory. Conduct yourself in a civil manner, showing respect for those with whom you engage.
    - Microsoft offers guidance on how to be a better digital citizen in its [Digital Citizenship in Action Toolkit](#).

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* Survey conducted by Blueocean Market Intelligence

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