

HOME CYBER DEFENSE

ARE YOU SAFE FROM CYBER CRIME?

WEEKLY

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This is a weekly publication dedicated to your personal cyber security. Our newsletter is designed to help the public recognize and avoid cyber threats while they are online. If you are not a subscriber, please go to HomeCyberDefense.net to sign up.

Protecting Your Social Media Accounts After You Have Passed Away



You may not realize it, but nearly every hour of every day, we are building up a digital estate. But what happens to our digital estates and social media profiles when we pass on? For most people, social media accounts play a

big role in our lives. Your online presence is – for better or worse – where people look to understand you. Managing this data, in both life and afterwards, is important.

Each social media platform addresses deceased users. The only way to deactivate a Twitter account is if a friend or family member reaches out and can provide an ID as well as a copy of the user's death certificate. On LinkedIn, a friend or family member needs to fill out this form to request deactivation. While Facebook and Instagram will deactivate upon request, they also offer an option to "memorialize" the accounts of deceased users. Facebook adds a "Remembering" badge to the profile, hides the profile from public spaces, and prevents anyone from logging onto the account. Anything the user posted previously is still visible and, depending on the settings, friends can still add memories and comments to the wall. If a legacy contact was appointed, that person can update your photo, respond to friend requests, and add a pinned post to your profile (example: a final message). As for Instagram, a memorialized account is also hidden from public spaces and no one can log into the account but there is no option for a legacy contact.

So with this information in mind, here are a few key rules to protect your social media.

Lay Out A Plan

It might seem frivolous to make plans for your Facebook account when you have a home, kids, and a spouse to worry about, but it's a good idea. Roger Ebert apparently left instructions with his wife on the use of his Twitter account. Sit down and think of the following questions:

- What do you want done with your accounts?
- Do you want everything deleted or to live on forever? This will depend on the type of account and site.
- Who do you trust that can get it done? Leave specific instructions about how you'd like them to be managed with a loved one.

With Facebook and Instagram, it shouldn't be much of a hassle for your family to get them memorialized. But with Twitter or really anything else, you'll need to put some thought into it, since someone else would essentially have to take over your account.

Appoint a Legacy Contact

Facebook accounts can be memorialized without a legacy contact. But if you don't appoint one prior to your death, that means nothing about your profile can be changed. No updated photos, no pinned final messages, and no means to accept new friends who want to share their memories. If you'd like to keep that option open, do this:

- Go to Settings
- Then Security
- Then Legacy Contact
- Type in any Facebook friend's name and hit "Add"
- After you click Send, your friend will be notified that they've been appointed as your legacy contact

You just have to be 18 or older to use this feature and you can remove and/or add a legacy contact at any time. (Here's how they break it down on Facebook.)

Leave Your Login Information with Someone You Trust

All three of these social media sites explicitly ban family members and friends from obtaining your password, even if they can verify who they are. If you want to keep your Twitter account active, you'll need to entrust someone with your login credentials. This person can keep an eye on your account for potential hackers and if they see something suspicious, immediately change the password and report the issue.

While you should always hope for the best, plan for everything. More than half of states in America have some form of digital estate legislation in place, which allows, to some degree, an Executor to treat digital assets like any other asset the deceased owned. But unlike an antique table,

digital accounts are more complicated because each service has its own set of rules.

For those of you you say that you don't care what happens to your social media after you are gone, imagine this scenario: It's a few months after you pass, and your family is doing their best to move on. Then one day, your social media accounts are overrun with inappropriate photos and virus-spreading spam. While it might be shocking, or even amusing, to acquaintances or people you barely knew, it will be deeply troubling to those who were closest to you. Better to address these issues now than leave them for your loved ones to handle when you are gone.

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