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SIIA Public Policy News

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SIIA Issues Statement on FTC Settlement with Google over Privacy Issues during "Buzz" Rollout

Washington, DC (March 30, 2011) -- The Software and Information Industry Association (SIIA) released the following statement in response to the Federal Trade Commission's proposed settlement for privacy issues that arose in the context of Google's rollout of the "Buzz" social network in February of 2010:

When Google Buzz launched, privacy advocates and some Google users complained that the way the service was rolled out posed privacy problems, including the fact that personal information of the users of the new service, including email contacts, were publicly disclosed without sufficiently clear notice.

Google's adoption of transparent privacy control tools clearly demonstrates the ability of companies and industry to satisfy user and public policy concerns over the protection of personal information. The agreement between the FTC and Google shows that the FTC's authority to regulate unfair and deceptive practices can be brought to bear on company and industry information collection, use and disclosure practices.

Going forward, SIIA urges the FTC and other policy makers to approach these issues in a careful, fact-based manner so as to strike a balance between the need to protect consumer privacy and the importance of giving industry sufficient flexibility to provide the new and innovative services that customers want.

Mark MacCarthy, SIIA Vice President of Public Policy, said that "SIIA encourages voluntary industry action to provide users with levels of choice and control over their personal information appropriate to the sensitivity of information and the level of risk associated with its disclosure. SIIA members are responsive to consumer needs. They have implemented strong privacy mechanisms, and will continue to do so."

MacCarthy added, "This settlement makes it clear that the FTC has sufficient authority to make sure that companies keep the promises they make to consumers regarding the use of information, and to impose practical measures to ensure that their privacy policies are reasonable. Policy makers contemplating additional privacy legislation should reconsider whether there is any need for granting the FTC additional regulatory authority in this area."

About SIIA

The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. SIIA provides global services in government relations, business development, corporate education and intellectual property protection to more than 500 leading software and information companies. For further information, visit: www.siia.net.

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