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Terms of Use for websites

The Terms of Use specifies specifically what can and cannot be used on a webpage. Websites are intellectual property of the creator. Since it's available freely to the public, we need a way to tell the public what can and cannot be used, and how it can be used. If there are pictures on the website, a Terms of Use can specify whether they can be copied for free, not copied at all, copied for a fee, or anything else that the terms of use specifies. When copyright issues are taken to court, the court may look at the Terms of Use and determine if there is a copyright violation. The Terms of Use is a legal binding agreement between the website and the user. When they view the website, they are agreeing to the Terms of Use. For this reason Terms of Use pages need to be very specific.

Microsoft's website contains a Terms of Use policy which describes everything needed to the user on what they can and cannot use. It is divided up into smaller elements and is easy to read. Provided at the bottom is a question and answer section. This is in real world terms and not in legal terms. This helps a lot in helping the user understand what they are responsible for. Microsoft also words it in a very friendly way which sounds more like they made this policy for the user and not just to save their skin or to use against others in court. This seems to be a great way to word and create a document of this type.

Brother Robertson has specified in class that a Terms of Use needs to contain five different parts: Copyright Statement, Privacy Policy, Security Policy, Acceptable Use Policy,

Legal Jurisdiction Statement. The Copyright statement tells who the intellectual work belongs to and a date. If others are able to change content on your website then it may be appropriate to explain this and allow someone to contact you if another user is breaking copyright rules. This allows you to fix the content, or get correct permission/licenses without any kind of legal interference. The Privacy Policy gives the user an outline of what can be shared and what cannot be shared, meaning content and images. The Security Policy is a way to outline how members visiting your website should act. Whether it be posting, uploading, downloading, any act that they can perform at/in the website should be posted here. The Acceptable Use Policy outlines how the user can use the content on the website. If they want to download a picture, how can they? Do they need written permission? Do they need to pay for it? All of these details need to be outlined here in the Acceptable Use Policy. The Legal Jurisdiction Statement outlines what would happen to the user if they were to abuse the policy that was laid out for them, the same one they agreed to by entering into your site.

With these policies in place, you can protect the content of your own website as well as the rights and privacy of others visiting your website. This can also save a business thousands, even hundreds of thousands of dollars in lawsuits, and save a lot of people some heartache that may come due to copyright issues.

Works Cited

Blaine Robertson, "Terms of Use Policy"

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