

Microsoft wants Google, Yahoo on board before it adopts rules.

Microsoft said it wants Google and Yahoo to agree to European demands to cut the time they keep users' search-engine records before it does the same.

While Microsoft is able to meet the requirements, it wants to wait until its larger search rivals get on board, Brendon Lynch, the company's director of privacy strategy, said Sunday in a telephone interview. A group of European Union officials — dubbed the Article 29 Data Protection Working Party — have asked search engines to purge their user records after six months.



"The proposals are feasible, but we want them to be adopted industrywide," Lynch said. "If Microsoft alone adopted the recommendations of the Article 29 Data Protection Working Party, it wouldn't have a broad impact on its users in Europe because our market share is so small."

Shortening the length of time that search engines keep such records could eat into advertising revenue, the main source of sales for Google and Yahoo. The companies rely on users' queries to target advertising more specifically. That has raised privacy questions, since search engines keep track of exactly where customers go online and what they read and buy.

Search-engine providers that retain online search data for longer than six months break EU privacy laws, the Article 29 group said in April. The association is made up of data-protection officials from the 27 EU nations and from three non-EU countries, including Norway.

Google cut the length of time it keeps data to nine months in September, from 18 months.

Microsoft said in July 2007 that it would remove identifiers from individuals' search data after 18 months. That same month, Yahoo said it would adopt a 13-month cutoff.

Both Microsoft and Yahoo trail Google in European Internet search traffic. Google has almost 80 percent of the market, while Microsoft and Yahoo together account for about 4 percent, according to research company ComScore.

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118 A Cass Street | Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2438 | Traverse City, Michigan (MI) USA 49685-2438
Tel: 231-922-9460 | Toll: 866-536-8614 | Fax: 231-929-3398
Office Hours: M-F 8AM-9PM EST* | Email: Info@peakpositions.com