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Facebook Members Sell their Own Ads

By [Louise Story](#)

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More than 1,500 [Facebook](#) users have started placing advertisements on their own profile pages—despite the social networking site’s rule against such ads.

They are posting them with the help of a Montreal-based company called [Weblo](#), an advertising network that sells ads onto people’s blogs and social networking profile pages.

Visitors to Weblo’s site will see that they can “earn money from your popularity online.” Weblo estimates people’s advertising value based on variables like how many friends they have in their social networks, and, thus, how many people will likely see ads on their pages.

Facebook does not allow users to sell ads on their profile pages. Chris Kelly, Facebook’s chief privacy officer, told me on Nov. 6 that is because Facebook does not want people’s profile pages to become cluttered.

“We don’t want a free-for-all,” he said.

But Weblo’s chief executive Rocky Mirza says that people should be able to sell space on their pages on Facebook (and a variety of other sites like [MySpace](#) and [YouTube](#)) because they are the content creators on those sites. Facebook would have no content if not for its users, he said, which makes it different from media organizations, for example, that have content because they pay reporters.

Weblo started the service in October. In the past month the number of people using it on Facebook has grown from 200 to 1500.

“Obviously Facebook is providing the infrastructure, so they can place ads on the left side,” Mr. Mirza said. “But users should be getting paid for the time they spend on the Internet and the friends they draw to their pages.”

Facebook does allow people and companies that design widgets for use on the site to sell ads in the widget interface page, called the “canvas page.” But those widget companies cannot sell ads on the profile pages, either.

Weblo shares ad revenues with the people who let it place ads on their pages. It will be interesting to see how long Facebook allows them to carry on. Facebook clearly would not want to alienate even more users now, after its [Beacon debacle](#) over the past month.

Weblo gets to the heart of a question of ownership that will generate more debate as more people spend more of their time looking at content created by other ordinary people. When users post reviews of restaurants on a media site, for example, should they get to share in the ad revenues generated?

Facebook has also yet to respond to my inquiry about Weblo, but I will update you when they do.

People can also sign up to run weblo ads on their pages by using a Weblo widget on the site called [Internet Worth](#).